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Thoughts on the religious
state of the country

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HARPER & BROTHERS

HAVE RECENTLY PUBLISHED—

FOUR YEARS IN GREAT BRITAIN. By Rev. C. Colton. New Edition, in one volume, 12mo.

The following are a few of the literary notices that have been taken of this production :—

"Mr. Colton's work contains much valuable statistical information with regard to the revenue, expenses, church establishment, and taxation of Great Britain, which he has collected with exemplary diligence. He has described with enthusiasm and with effect the extreme beauty of the country, the magnificence of ancient edifices, the perfect order and admirable taste of the country seats, and the gorgeous spectacle of the king's levee and the queen's drawing-room."—*American Quarterly Review.*

"Mr. Colton gives us the best description we have seen of O'Connell." . . . . . "When he comes to Lord Brougham, he introduces a long and pompous description of a scene between him and Mr. Canning; a passage which on a former occasion decorated the pages of this journal. Mr. Colton's was description is a hundred times better." . . . . . "Mr. Colton describes his presentation to the king, and the joys and sorrows of that courtly mob. In the queen's drawingroom he was most struck with the Duchess of Kent, mother of the Princess Victoria. He describes her as a woman of noble bearing, and most graceful and attractive manner."—*North American Review.*

"Four Years in Great Britain combines the rare qualities of a sketch book and a book of facts. It has enough of the former to enchain the attention of youth and the most superficial readers—to gratify the glowing imagination of the sentimentalist; and enough of the latter to make the work almost indispensable, as a record of various and important information on British society, manners, statistics, politics, statesmen, metropolitan and rural customs, &c." . . . . . "Mr. Colton has given us a work, which develops no ordinary talent—entertaining to one class, instructive to another, interesting and useful to all."—*Knickerbocker.*

"We take leave to recommend this book to all such as like to have useful information blended with entertainment in what they read. The writer was long enough in the country and among the people he describes, to acquire facts correctly, and form just opinions, and his candour appears to be very great. His accounts of men and manners generally are clever and amusing; and he has shown much skill in the selection of such topics as will be most likely to combine novelty and interest to American readers."—*New-York Gazette.*

"The general strain of remark in these volumes is grave, and their tendency salutary to the cause of truth and virtue. The pages of our author cannot be perused without leading us to think and feel." . . . . "The picture which these volumes unfold of the church of England, is a work of no ordinary merit. We thought ourselves prepared for a statement of the enormous wealth of the establishment; yet the development was astounding. . . . . We must accede to Mr. Colton the palm of having taken all pains to attain a just conclusion. He was not ignorant of the difficulties attending this subject. He has furnished us with the means of estimating the expense; and with the scrutiny of a Bentham, he has compared the wealth of the English church with the revenues of France, Spain, and Rome, and calculated the expense of Christianity in different countries." . . . . "Mr. Colton, in our view, betrays neither scantiness of knowledge, nor narrowness of view." . . . . "Our critics must do their part towards rendering every traveller an Irving in manner and a Colton in matter."—*Literary and Theological Review.*

"We perceive that the public press, as well as common rumour, is universally speaking in terms of decided and strong approbation of Mr. Colton's work. The attention it has excited, and the commendation it is receiving, are, perhaps, unrivalled for a work of the kind, in the space of one week after its publication."—*New-York Observer.*

"Of Four Years in Great Britain we have heard but one universal expression of approbation. Indeed, its pleasing and unaffected style, its simple and unpretending relation of facts and impressions, and its short and pithy descriptions, render it agreeable to every reader; and to an *American* the adventures and opinions of a countryman in and with regard to Old England, must be peculiarly interesting. Its sentiments on religion, and particularly with regard to church establishments, are gratifying to a Christian and liberal-minded community—and the politician may gather from its details of British resources, politics, and jurisprudence, much useful information."—*Brooklyn Advertiser.*

"Let those who want to know what Great Britain is, from the throne down to menials of the lowest condition, what are the fruits of her monarchy, her aristocracy, her church and state—let those who wish to have set before them lively and graphic pictures of society, of men, of manners, of things, so as to see them without the trouble and expense of going abroad—let those who are fond of travelling with the traveller, of seeing with his eyes, of hearing with his ears, and of enjoying with him the agreeable things of town and country—in England, Scotland, and Ireland—read this book. We did not think so much could be said of Great Britain which we did not know. Mr. Colton has made it all a fresh and new story. It is a contribution for which the public will thank him."—*National Intelligencer.*

"This work bears intrinsic evidence of candour. Yet it is to be observed, and much to the author's credit, that to spy out the nakedness of the land has by no means been his object. If he saw much to censure, he has good sense enough and gentlemanly feeling, to know that censurable points are not the most interesting materials whereof to make a useful book. An entertaining book he has assuredly made—eminently so."—*New-York Times.*

"Mr. Colton seems to have possessed such excellent judgment in finding out scenes and objects worthy of a traveller's attention—so much tact in avoiding the hackneyed and commonplace—and he describes what he saw with such vivacity; and more than all, he has so many personal anecdotes to tell of his own adventures among beggars, and coachmen, and landlords, and peasants, and gentlemen and ladies, and he tells them with so much point and good humour, that the reader feels as much at home with him as though he were an old acquaintance. One thing we like him for especially; and that is, for giving such copious details as he does of scenes, and persons, and classes of society, out of the common routine of travellers in England; and this, of course, is to be ascribed in a great measure to the length of time employed in picking up his knowledge. Four years in England are enough to furnish materials for a dozen volumes; it may easily be conceived, then, how richly two volumes must be filled, where such an ample stock of recollections existed. In a word, we like Mr. Colton's book, and we think all other readers will like it too."—*New-York Evening Star.*

"We have looked through these volumes with a deeper interest than we had anticipated in opening them, and we lay them down with the impression, that they are destined to exercise a most salutary influence on the state of public opinion in this country—an influence never more needed than at this time, when the criticisms of British officers on half-pay, curates wanting parishes, female speculators who have failed in making their fortunes among us, as well as actresses who have succeeded, have nearly frightened the timid, the thoughtless, the vulgarly genteel, from their propriety, and driven them to the conclusion that there must be something wrong in the very constitution of society on this side the Atlantic, or there could not be so great ado about it. To all such we urgently recommend the perusal of Mr. Colton's book, with the confident anticipation that it will afford a radical cure for their diseased fancies. The author has returned to this country purely and exultingly an American. On the great questions of liberty and absolute political equality as contrasted with monarchy and aristocracy—entire freedom and non-interference in religion as contrasted with a union of church and state—he is in heart and soul, in judgment and feeling, with his country and her institutions; and his convictions are expressed with a manliness which contrast most forcibly with the ignorant and volatile gossip, the small witticism, and the gross outrage of domestic privacy and confiding hospitality, which have characterized the herds of English works on America. The vein of seriousness in which the whole is conceived will not impair the pleasure even of the habitually thoughtless, while it will heighten the confidence of all in its statements, and their respect for its conclusions."—*The New-Yorker.*

"This pleasing book reminds us sometimes of the simplicity of Goldsmith's Vicar, and sometimes of the sensitiveness of Sterne. Mr. Colton has much too that is solid and discriminating in his sketches; and his style and character unfold so agreeably, that one feels, at length, as if in converse with a friend."—*Southern Rose Bud.*

"Decidedly the best, most sensible, and entertaining description of English scenery, manners, antiquities, distinguished men, and political peculiarities, that has ever been published, in this country at least, is a work in two volumes, by the Rev. Calvin Colton."—*New-York Commercial Advertiser and Spectator.*

"The book differs materially and advantageously from ordinary memoranda of travels in this particular, that instead of giving a continuous narrative of all his movements, necessarily embracing much tedious and uninteresting detail, he has made up his work somewhat after the fashion of a sketch book, in distinct chapters, each containing a description of some interesting scene, or incident, or person, or class of society. Mr. Colton has contented himself with describing what he saw in such language as any sensible, well-educated man would use, who had eyes to see, and a soul to feel withal, but no particular ambition to figure as a turner of magniloquent paragraphs, therein also differing materially from the multitude of tourists, who are marvellously given to 'gild refined gold and paint the lily.'"—*New-York Mercantile Advertiser.*

. . . . . "Two as pleasant, entertaining volumes as one might wish to read; and, strange to say, as strongly marked with novelty of detail as any other characteristic, after all the multitude of books, letters, and impressions, and descriptions, with which the public has been favoured for many years past by all manner of tourists. The principal cause of this freshness both of matter and manner is, that very thing which at first sight one would suppose most incompatible with it, viz., the length of the author's sojourn among the people he describes. Ordinary travellers merely go scampering through the country, noting, of course, only the prominent points which lie in the accustomed track. Mr. Colton was there four years, and had time to go looking for new things, and to make repeated and deliberate investigations of those of which others have given us merely the results of a few hurried glances. Mr. Colton's descriptions both of men and things are certainly very clever, lively, graphic, and entertaining; and he has collected facts, political, statistical, &c., which are curious and valuable."—*Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer.*

"Among the numerous works of this class, we have rarely met with any which we have read with more pleasure than the volumes now presented to our perusal under the above title. Candid in his opinions and judicious in his observations, the writer has brought together a large mass of information respecting those subjects which are most interesting to an American reader. The minuteness of his descriptions tends to impress very forcibly upon the mind those scenes of which he treats; and, while looking over the different chapters in which Mr. Colton speaks of the coronation and other splendid sights of this kind, we can almost imagine ourselves a beholder of the spectacle."—*American Traveller.*

"We have read with pleasure 'Colton's Four Years in Great Britain.' It is an instructive and interesting work. The author exhibits much shrewdness and accuracy of observation; and there is a uniform, moderate tone—an absence of exaggeration throughout the book, which ensures the confidence of the reader. The picture presented of the wealth, magnificence, pervading comfort, and civilization of England is very striking. The extreme beauty and high cultivation of the country, the splendid relics of former times, the perfection of roads and coaches, the gorgeous pageantries of the most magnificent court of the world, the security of property and person, and the elegance and refinement of the higher classes of society, are all described and commented upon with the enthusiasm and delight which their contemplation is calculated to inspire in a benevolent and cultivated mind."—*National Gazette.*

THOUGHTS

ON THE

RELIGIOUS STATE

OF THE

COUNTRY;

WITH

REASONS FOR PREFERRING EPISCOPACY.

BY

REV. CALVIN COLTON.

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INTRODUCTION.

Inasmuch as it has been supposed by some, that the author of these pages has made certain demonstrations with his pen against that, which he now adopts and advocates, it is not unlikely, that his consistency will be drawn in question. Admitting that he has manifested such an inclination, it can only be said, that he has changed his opinion, which is in part, the design of this book to set forth, with the reasons thereof. If he has written against, and in the conflict, or in any train of consequences, has been convinced, that his former position was wrong, the least atonement he can make is to honour what he now regards as truth with a profession as public and a defence as earnest, as any other doings of his on the other side. It is due to himself to say and to claim, that while he remained a Presbyterian, he was an honest one; and it would be very strange, if he had never said or done anything to vindicate that ground. Doubtless he has. He may now be an equally honest Episcopalian; and charity would not require him to assert it.

But the things referred to in the author's previous public statements, are not exactly what has been supposed. The author does not deny—he has given sufficient proof—that the existence and operation of the church establishment in England, or the union of church and state there—has been treated by him as an evil, and

a grievous one. Those who have been accustomed to read his communications in the columns of a New-York weekly journal, while he was in London, must have observed, that his later impressions on this and other kindred topics differed somewhat from the earlier; that although he never ceased to regard the union of church and state as an evil, he became more and more convinced, that reform in this, as in other bad conditions of British society, to be safe must be slow; and that it was impossible to sever church and state at a single blow, without great hazard to public interests—without dissolving society itself. He has in those communications compared the union of church and state in Great Britain to the warp and woof of their clothing fabrics, and given his opinion, that, as the withdrawal of either part of such a work would destroy it, so an entire and instantaneous severance of the church from the state in Great Britain, as to all the ramifications and combinations of their union, would be equally ruinous and frightfully disastrous. From the earliest periods of their civilization, religion and the church have always been subjects of parliamentary legislation, and are interwoven with the whole structure of society; so that the jurisdiction ecclesiastical is a distinct department of the civil code, and requires the devotion of a man's life to become an eminent lawyer or judge in the court of Doctors' Commons, London. It will be evident, therefore, at a glance, that society thus constituted will not bear to have this all pervading element thoroughly ejected at once. It cannot be. But there may be reform, so far as it operates to the disadvantage and oppression of any class of the community; and there should be.

The author has ever felt and manifested a deep sympathy for those, who are oppressed by the operation of the church establishment of England. His sympathies carried him so far in his earlier communications on this

subject, as to find fault with the better and more exemplary class of clergymen in the Church of England, when he thought their zeal for the establishment blinded them to a sense of justice towards Dissenters; and when he saw them taking their stand against those degrees of reform, which were necessary to remove the most obvious occasions of complaint. And he is of the same opinion still, though he no more doubts the honesty of these excellent men, or their sincere concern for the interests of religion, than he doubts the virtue of the standing order in the state of Connecticut, when they took their stand against the proposal to place all Christian sects on an equal footing. The cases are precisely parallel; and the same scene is now acting over in England. In the same manner as in Connecticut, both parties will be glad when they are through with it; and it will be seen and admitted on all hands, that they who claim to support only the religion of their own choice, do it with good reason; and that it is better for society to allow this privilege to all.

It is possible, indeed, that in finding fault with those, who have set up the claims of the Church of England against these rights, the author may have indulged in expressions of disrespect for the church itself. It was very natural for an American to do so, when he saw the vices of such an establishment. But though he may have done this incidentally and in a slight degree, the main current and bearing of his strictures on that church have had respect to its character and operations, as a state institution. It must have been seen, that he opens and concludes his chapter on the Church of England, in his "Four Years in Great Britain," with a disclaimer against being supposed as meddling with the question of Episcopacy. His design in that collection of facts was to show the evils of uniting church and state, that it might serve as a warning to our country, so far as it might be noticed. If any persons may have identified

these evils, or any part of them, with Episcopacy, it is not the author's fault; he has never done it himself. That Episcopacy is the established Church of England, is an accident. Presbyterianism is the established religion of Scotland, and of some parts of the North of Europe. So was it of England under the protectorate of Cromwell. No matter what had been the form of the established religion of Great Britain, in the same circumstances the results must have been substantially the same. It is not Episcopacy that has induced these evils, but the vicious and impracticable plan of uniting church and state for the benefit of society.

There is an incidental, though important topic, brought under notice in these pages, the treatment of which in this place may also give occasion to arraign the author's consistency, viz.—revivals of religion. It is known, that while in England he wrote and published a book, as an advocate of revivals. By the fifth chapter of the present volume, it might seem, that he has altered his opinion. On one particular point of some importance in the theory of revivals, viz. special effort, he has changed his views; and now believes, that uniform, well ordered, and persevering efforts, to rouse from lethargy on the one hand, and on the other to attemper, guide, and control overheated excitements, is the best economy for the interests of religion and the salvation of souls. Formerly the author did think well of special effort, and has advocated the principle in his English work on American Revivals; but the excess to which it has been carried in this country, and its disastrous consequences, have compelled him to pause, and in that item of opinion to modify his views. In company with the great majority of Presbyterian and Congregational clergymen in this country, the author has always sympathized with that class of revivals, which he undertook to advocate in England; and to this time

he has suffered no change of opinion in this particular.

But it is now placed beyond a doubt before the public, that the great majority of religious excitements in this country, called revivals, have entirely changed their character: they are not what they used to be. In the author's work on this subject, published in London, he took some notice of these new proceedings, and expressed directly and indirectly his anxiety and diffidence in regard to them. Since that time his opinion has ripened to conviction, that they are undesirable and injurious; and of course the peculiarities appertaining to them have in his mind fallen into a corresponding disrespect. His opinion of revivals has not been changed; it is the mode of originating and conducting them, which extensively prevails, from which he dissents. In the light of this explanation it will be seen, that there is no inconsistency between his present and former views on this great subject, with the single exception, already specified, of giving up the principle of special effort. He resigns the opinion in favour of special effort, principally in view of facts belonging to the recent religious history of this country; and believes, that more can be accomplished for the cause of religion by a uniform than a fitful career.

In another work, *The Americans, by an American in London*, the present author devoted a chapter to the removal of sundry aspersions, which in England had been cast upon the developments of religion in America, as he considered unjustly. He was called upon from the most respectable quarters, and consented. That effort, however, so far as it related to religion, was of the nature of an *apology;* it was not an attempt to recommend or establish anything; but to wipe away aspersions. There may be incidental betrayals of opinion; but it was not an object to declare opinion as to the expediency of the practices, which had been scandalized. It was vir-

tually the proof of a negative; that's all; which ordinarily is not an easy task. The author is not aware, that there is any ground for the charge of inconsistency in that quarter. He has not, however, taken the trouble of reviewing his own record; but relies upon a presumption based upon the object then in view.

That an industrious caterer should be able to make an array of things, that have dropped from the author's pen, somewhat at variance with his present views, as brought out in this volume, is very possible. One principal object of these pages is to give reasons for a *change* of opinion. The author can never deny his own *litera scripta*, even though it be brought in to neutralize his own antagonist opinions. He has honestly given his reasons for an honest change in his views, in opposition to views formerly entertained with equal honesty; and they must go for what they are worth. He can neither claim, nor solicit any indulgence, but the award of an honest public.

Of one thing the author feels a good degree of confidence:—That none of his former friends will accuse him of a bad spirit, nor generally, if at all, of a want of fairness. Doubtless he may be open to criticism; but not to the charge of having gone into the discussion of this subject under the influence of passion, or of feeling. He has simply laid down a comprehensive copy of his own thoughts and reasonings on the question, and delineated the path, from beginning to end, by which he came to the result. As few are led into such trains of reasoning independently of the influence of society, it is quite likely, that many minds will sympathize with the author, if not in all, yet in some of his thoughts. His object in all his statements has been, as far as possible, to keep upon ground that is common, so as to secure assent and conviction without the toil of argument. What everybody sees, they think they know; and if a

book in their hands states what accords with their own observations, it is ordinarily more agreeable than that which is far fetched, and the truth of which is not so manifest at a glance.

The author has adopted and cherishes with great fondness the opinion, that all differences about religion, its doctrines, and economy may be discussed in good temper—without disturbance of personal feeling or public tranquillity; and if he has not exemplified this innocent spirit, it is not because he has not endeavoured to do it. His own conscience anticipates the award of moderation, at least, whatever may be thought of his reasonings. If anybody shall be able to point out a departure from this rule, it will be to him a subject of regret, and a proof that we "know not what manner of spirit we are of." For if he is confident of anything, it has been on this point. Not feeling anxious, it is hardly possible that he should have betrayed anxiety.

The usual train of argument on this subject has been almost entirely omitted, with the exception of the fourth chapter—on the claims of Episcopacy; and that makes no pretension to an argument in detail, but is merely a comprehensive statement of the current of the author's thoughts on the subject, suggesting rather than presenting proof. The author's main design has been to address himself to the *present time* and to the *present state* of the religious public, in such manner and form, and with such developments, as may be appreciated without effort. He has proceeded on the principle, that there are certain things, which the public generally observe, and which, when brought out before them, will obtain a general verdict, *that it is even so;* and that the public will perceive, that to be felt they only required to be stated.

The pertinency of the last chapter to the general purpose of this volume, may not, perhaps, be so obvious at first sight. But as it was the use made of the prin-

ciple discussed there, in the religious connexion from which the author has separated, which constituted one of the leading causes of turning his attention to the subject and claims of Episcopacy, it was natural for him to notice it. It will be seen, also, that peculiar circumstances of the present time have made it a subject of absorbing interest to the public.

The author feels, that it is due to himself to observe distinctly, that in the comparisons he has made in the second chapter between Episcopacy and other religious institutions of the country, in the estimate of their comparative powers, it is most remote from his design to depreciate the merits or importance of any of these organizations. There is no one of them, that he has named, which he does not hold in high respect; not one, which he does not regard as highly important in its place; not one, for whose prosperity he does not earnestly pray; and he regards them all and many others not named, as providential developments of the religious enterprise and energy of the community. Any slight criticisms he may have made are not to be taken as detracting aught from this high estimation and this praise. The author believes, indeed, that they will continue to undergo gradual changes, as they have heretofore done, for the better; and wherein they have erred, their errors will be corrected. Their existence, progress, and influence have demonstrated one great and practical problem, viz.—How much may be accomplished by social organization and combined enterprise; and the wisdom of experience will doubtless be turned to a profitable account. It may not be necessary, or even desirable, that each and all of these institutions should continue in the same form, or under the same name. Having resolved the problem, of what can be done—or rather, that anything desirable may be accomplished by association—they may themselves be resolved into other forms, or gradually merged into other institutions, as

may be deemed expedient. Some may be expanded, while others are contracted; they may be increased in number, or diminished; but the matter of power and influence is undoubtedly in them; they would be good for nothing if it were not so. How that influence may be most safely invested and most securely applied, will of course be a question to be discussed and determined from time to time, as the exigences of society and the changes of opinion may require. To assume, that this point is not to be discussed, would be very imprudent. It is ever open, and will remain so. It is not the author's object, in the chapter referred to, to settle this question; but simply to remove a common and popular objection to Episcopacy, as involving too much power, by showing, that American Episcopacy has in fact less power, than these institutions. The author, however, is inclined to the opinion, that the lesson taught the church by these efforts, will be the means of rousing her to take that lead, with which she was originally commissioned; and that, when she shall show a willingness to do the work, it will be resigned to her hands.

Although by a voluntary act the author separates himself from his former brethren by an Ecclesiastical pale, he will not be divided from them for want of respect and affection. He can never forget who were his parents; who were the teachers and guides of his youth; who were his theological instructers; who for many years were his brethren and fathers in "the ministry of reconciliation;" who were the highly valued and cordially esteemed acquaintances providentially and from time to time made in that circle; who are the many, with whom, in this country and in England, he has been accustomed to sympathize on all Christian themes, and with whom he has often "taken sweet counsel" and prayed;—from all these he does not—he cannot turn away; but will still and ever be with them in heart, in faith, in prayer,

and as a fellow worker in the "kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." To us all, "there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism"—even that of the Holy Spirit. Though one may be "of Paul, another of Cephas, and another of Apollos," we are all "of Christ." We can agree to differ, in all that is unavoidable, without being unkind. If the author has offended in any word of these pages, he will indeed be sorry. He has tried not to do so, and will believe that he has succeeded, till it shall otherwise be proved. His principles he has been obliged to maintain; but his friends he will never cease to respect and love.

C. COLTON.

New-York, May, 1836.

REASONS, &c.

CHAPTER I.

Changing Religious Connexions — New aspects of Religion in America—Defects of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism.

Changing one's religious connexions is not in high credit. Ordinarily there does not seem to be much, if any good resulting from it, either to the public, or to individuals; not unfrequently, and perhaps in the majority of instances, where it occurs within the range of Christian sects, there is positive evil.

To renounce any form of paganism for any form of Christianity, will be approved by Christians, at least; to pass from one Christian sect to another, is an indirect censure on that which is left behind, and a compliment to that which is adopted; the latter is gratified, the former feels injured. One has gained what the other has lost; but the public, the world, even in a religious point of view, has gained little—perhaps nothing—it may have suffered. It is doubtless better, for the most part, that accessions to the best and most useful forms of Christianity should be made from those, who have not attached themselves anywhere. All such increase is a positive gain to the body of Christians, and to society. In this way the true church of God may ultimately, and without violence—without disturbance even among the different sects who claim to be right—absorb the world.

It is not very natural—nor can I with my present views feel that it is very desirable—for frequent transfers to be made from one section or pale of the Christian community to another, for any other reason than the imperative demands of conscience. Then it is suitable, and if credited, will not in any case be dishonourable, nor injurious to the general interests of religion, except in peculiar circumstances.

The transfer of lay members of Christian societies from one to another, is comparatively of less importance, though not without influence. But when ministers change their relation, their conspicuous standing before the public makes an impression. The public is in some measure and for a moment startled. It is undoubtedly a responsible step, and ought to have good and strong reasons to support it.

I frankly confess, that, had not my pastoral relation been providentially broken up, and motives led me abroad, it is very likely I should not have been shaken or disturbed on this question. It is true, indeed, that the same events in the United States, which were the immediate occasion of challenging my attention to this subject, would necessarily have come before me. But I could not have viewed them in the same light; I could not have been surprised by them; it is possible, that in company with scores and hundreds of my ministerial brethren, I might have fallen into the same current, and sympathized with those transactions and occurrences, which are now rather painful, than agreeable to contemplate.

But at the very moment when these events were in the incipient stage of their career, or before their proper character had been developed, I was removed to a distant position—to London. Before I had been there nine months, I became the expounder and advocate of American revivals of religion before the British public—a very presumptuous office, as some perhaps might think. But I was led into it, first, by yielding to special and earnest solicitations to preach on the subject; and next, by complying with similar requests to give the substance

of those lectures to the public. But it was revivals of the original type, which I advocated; revivals, in the midst of which, when a child, my own heart had been touched with the power, and kindled with the affections of religion; revivals, where the pastors were the sober guides of inquiring minds, praying with and for them; where reason and judgment were never shocked, but enlightened and left upon the seat of their influence, while conscience was probed and challenged to the performance of its appropriate office; revivals, of a character to be remembered with respect, but now, I fear, seldom witnessed, by reason of a spurious and unhappy leaven, so widely diffused over the land, which, in all religious excitements, prompts and too often succeeds in introducing extravagant and disastrous measures. My faith in revivals was strong; for I had grown up, and laboured as a minister, in the midst of them; and without anticipating the unhappy results of the application of new and extreme measures to public religious excitements, I of course ventured upon ground, which in present light I should have trodden with more reserve and caution.

When I returned to this country in the spring of 1835, I had not been here long before I discovered that America was another world than that, which I had left behind me in 1831. Of course I mean principally in a religious point of view; I might add in some others—in part gratifying, in part painful. But at present I have only to do with the religious features and aspects of the country.

When I had concluded to go abroad in 1831, being one day in conversation with a ministerial brother on the advantages and disadvantages of foreign travel, he intimated, as a common impression, "that it is prejudicial to the piety and Christian character of our ministers to visit England and the Continent. Indeed," said he, "it sometimes spoils them." I confess I was a little mortified at the expression of an opinion, which seemed to me so much the offspring of a narrow and weak mind. As if God and his grace are not the same everywhere;

as if the increase of knowledge could be purchased only at the expense of virtue; and therefore ignorance is the safest! I had been home but a few days before I heard a Reverend gentleman confess to the presiding officer of one of our Anniversaries at New-York, in his speech on the platform, "Sir, I have been guilty of the sin of going abroad!" The admonition served upon me four years previous was very naturally suggested by this confession.

Be this as it may, a righteous imputation or an unworthy prejudice—and if a prejudice, not very honourable to our country—it is doubtless true, that foreign travel enlarges the scope of one's vision, and gives him new views of men and things. Whatever may be the general fact, it can be owing only to a defect of virtue in him, if it does not fit him for a better and more useful sphere at home, whenever he shall return to it. If he is a statesman, he ought to be a wiser and better statesman; and if he is a patriot, there is little doubt that he will be so. If he is a literary and scientific man, it ought to inspire him to greater diligence in his pursuits; and it can scarcely fail to have such an influence. If he is an artist, let who will laud the inspirations and sufficiency of a self-taught genius, a visit to the principal capitals of Europe is indispensable to his highest possible attainments. If he is a Christian, or a Christian minister, I see no necessary reason in experience, or within the range of my observation, why, with the world before him, with his Bible in his portmanteau, with the ocean or the land, town or country, as his place of prayer, his Christian graces should not be improved and invigorated, with the increased advantages of that enlargedness of mind, which a knowledge of the world, seeing it as it is, affords him. He ought to have a higher and a stronger character, and be better qualified for influence and doing good, wherever he may be.

If, however, it be assumed that the model of Christian and ministerial character, intellectual and moral, which is the unavoidable doom of the narrowest possible sphere of action and observation, is of course and always the

best; and that a proportionate deterioration of character is the necessary consequence of every degree of extension given to that sphere, other things being equal, why, then, there is no more to be said, inasmuch as an admitted axiom cannot be contested.

With regard to myself, I confess, that one of two things must have been true on my return to my native land—either that the very civil and courteous augury of my friend and brother had come to pass in my own person, viz. that "going abroad had spoiled me," or else my country was spoiled. I do not mean, however, that my country was spoiled in everything, nor wholly spoiled in that particular to which I allude. But I do mean, that the Presbyterian and Congregational denominations of Christians, to which I had ever been attached, and in which I felt the deepest interest, seemed to me, to a very great extent, lying under the blighting desolation of the new and extravagant measures, by which religious excitements had been attempted and managed on the one hand, and of endless and bitter theological controversy on the other. I will not say, that I was shocked, because it came before me gradually; I was partly prepared for it by what I had heard; yet I had not conceived the extent of the evil.

It was impossible I should not pause over this melancholy picture, as I approached it, and was about to come in contact with it. I had been providentially and for a time eradicated from American society, and had returned to plant myself again in its bosom. And it was the Christian ministry, in which I wished and felt it my duty to be engaged. But almost the entire mass of the body of Christians to which I belonged, was pervaded with one or the other of two great evils, and their cognate ramifications—to *me* evils—from which my taste, my habits, my feelings, my whole soul revolted: extravagance and controversy. It seemed as if I was indeed "spoiled" for enjoyment or usefulness in that connexion. For the first time in my life, driven by the considerations of these great and afflicting results staring me in the face, I began to question the expediency and adequacy

of that system of church organization, which had not kept out these evils, and apparently could neither remedy nor abate them.

It is singular, and singularly true, how inconveniences, difficulties, and embarrassments, inherent in a system, and necessarily growing out of it, may be borne for years, perhaps through life, and the cause not be apparent to those who suffer these disadvantages. They are set down as evils of the human condition—the lot of man—of which all must have their portion in some shape.

So had I always been accustomed to view the evils of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism—for it cannot be denied that there are some, and not a few, of a grave character, in each of these systems. The moment that my attention was challenged to the defects of these systems, as separate wholes, in view of the present state and prospects of religion in our country, it was natural and unavoidable for the mind to recur to past experience. All that I had observed, enjoyed, suffered, as a member of the Presbyterian community, and in the experience of a Presbyterian clergyman for many years, came under review in each particular item for a purpose to me entirely new: it was to prove the system—and so far as I was able, to do it in the light of comparison. It is true, I had experience on one side, and little else on the other but theory and observation. So far, indeed, as the forms of public worship are concerned, I had become quite used to them in England; my prejudices against them, so far as I had any, and which were never strong, had been principally subdued. To these forms I could easily be reconciled; nay, I had discovered in them many comparative advantages; had enjoyed much satisfaction in the use of them; had even attained to no inconsiderable degree of complacency in them; and in this particular, was nearly "spoiled."

The abuses and enormities of the English church establishment my eyes were open to: I had seen and felt them; had sympathized with those who are oppressed by them; but my own good sense, what little I have, as I think will be the case with every sober man, had distin-

guished between Episcopacy and this accident—between its own proper organization and this adventitious alliance —between its forms of worship and its political connexion with the state in Great Britain. This relation, in my view, is not natural, but unnatural, and no less unfortunate; and although, in the estimation of the world, this form of Christianity is vitiated, and necessarily suffers on that account, sober, reflecting, and sensible minds will discriminate.

Late, and in many respects inconvenient, as it might seem for me to agitate this question, I felt that, in the existing circumstances of our country and of the world, it should be viewed as a great public question. Independent of its claims as binding on the conscience, or at least as more satisfactory, I first came to its consideration in the light of expediency. Formerly—and I know not that my confidence had been materially shaken, certainly not so much so as to induce me to entertain the idea of change—I had thought that Presbyterianism was the best organization. But when I returned from abroad after an absence of four years, a period most prolific in rapid, important, and momentous developments of American society, political and religious, and standing in all the additional light of a distant point of observation, it cannot be a subject of wonder, it was natural, unavoidable, that these new, and in many respects painful events, transpiring in the experiment and history of the Presbyterian church, should bring my mind to a pause, as I approached and felt myself coming in contact with the reality. Everybody felt and acknowledged, that it was bad, unhappy, and threatened to be ruinous.

Of course, if nothing had suggested a re-examination of the principles of Presbyterianism, or shaken my confidence in them, as compared with the principles and operation of another system, these occurrences, viewed only in the light of misfortunes, should have bound me stronger to my former connexion, and resolved me in company with my brethren to redeem it or die with it. It would be unmanly, pusillanimous, to desert a good cause merely because it is in difficulty. But in the case

of the leading Christian and Protestant sects of our country and of the world, they are all interested in the same great cause; they acknowledge each other as brethren, although they appear under separate standards. It is optional with every Christian to resolve in his own conscience what denomination he will attach himself to, and no other has a right to complain of his choice. In the exercise of the same prerogative he may transfer his relation from one to another: he does not desert the cause; he only moves and acts in a different corps of the same catholic host.

Of late years, especially since I have been abroad, I have been led to an examination of different systems of society, civil and religious, and to a consideration of their comparative merits. Had I remained a pastor in one place, it would have been impossible for me to make that comparison of Presbyterianism with other systems, which, coming as I did from a distant position, it was equally impossible for me not to make, especially in view of the facts which suggested it; and having got upon this inquiry, the practical operation of Presbyterianism in all its parts and as a whole, as it lay before me in the experience of many years, came at once and unavoidably under review. I had seen it in all its forms, and in the practical operation of all its principles, in a pastoral life of ten years, and from the lowest to the highest court, comprehending the powers and practice of the church Session, of Presbytery, of Synod, and of the General Assembly. I was intimately concerned in the revision of the statutes of the Presbyterian church, as a member of the General Assembly for two years, while that business was in hand. I have sat as moderator of different courts employed in public investigations and trials under these laws, in all, many weeks, not to say months, and in some instances several days in succession.

Of course, all Presbyterians consider the business of these courts, from the lowest to the highest, necessary, and so have I been accustomed to consider them. But I think I may safely appeal to the experience of every Presbyterian clergyman, that for the most part the busi-

ness of these courts is unedifying, uncomfortable—and none more so than that of the General Assembly. Nor is it the experience of one particular year, as being attributable to adventitious circumstances, but of year after year, and it aggravates with the advance of years. As if a church were a civil, and not a spiritual polity, it has seemed to me, that the principle of governing by the letter of the law has too much superseded a moral influence. Although professional counsel is prohibited, a lawyer seems as necessary to manage a case of discipline, and carry it through the different courts of the Presbyterian church, as in criminal processes before civil tribunals. It would doubtless be a great saving of time and of bad feeling, if lawyers were admitted, and no others were allowed to make an argument, or have to do with testimony, except as jurors. I have known a case of discipline, in the trial of which I sat as moderator, in the two lower courts, in all between two and three weeks, which went up to the General Assembly a third time, on account of some little informality of proceeding, having been twice remanded, burdening the records of every court, and occupying much of their precious time in each hearing, but which was after all so plain, that the wags of the town where the offender lived, and not without reason, sent me a message, as moderator of Presbytery, begging that we would not turn Mr. —— out of the church into the world, for the world were afraid to have him in it! I mention it merely to show how law has become a sad evil in the Presbyterian church. In my experience I have ever found it to be so; and yet, in the maintenance of the system, there seems to be no remedy. A case of discipline, originating in a private quarrel, which might be decided by the voice of a pastor with an hour's consideration, with justice to the parties and to the satisfaction of the public, is liable to annoy and vex the whole Presbyterian church of the United States for a succession of years, merely because there is so much law.

There is another case and application of law, assumed

to be proper and expedient in the Presbyterian church, which seems at this moment to threaten its existence. I mean the guarding of the creed to all the nicety of its minute, grammatical, and verbal distinctions. Nothing, as it seems to me, can be a greater abuse of creeds, and of Christian associations under their forms, than that any brother shall be deemed competent to call another to account, and, by forcing his public trial, subject him to censure, merely because he may happen to think a little differently on some one point of doctrine; or because, though he professes to hold the doctrine, he may explain it in a different way. Nothing is more evident than that a common creed, branching out into numerous and minute specifications, can never be held, on this principle, even by any two minds, not to say a thousand, or many thousands; because no two minds can be found so constituted and so trained as to think so exactly alike. If subscription to religious creeds, in their common forms, be understood to go farther than to profess—This is in general a satisfactory expression of my views, and I can cheerfully associate and act with those who hold these doctrines—or something like this—I know not how creeds can ever, in good conscience, be made use of by large associations of Christians. I will venture to say, that no sect of Christians, as a body, ever yet came nearer than this in their belief, as a matter of fact; nor can I conceive it possible, while the human mind remains the same.

He that attempts to bring any *two* minds to a perfect agreement in the nicest grammatical, verbal, and philosophical construction, and in every specific item of an ordinary religious creed, ought to have the power of working miracles; for it would be a miracle. How much more to bring three minds to such an agreement, or ten, or a hundred, or a thousand? It is setting up a rule, which must necessarily prevent all associations of Christians; and which, if enforced, will as certainly dissolve any association, that does exist. And yet, if I do not mistake, this is virtually the rule, the principle of association, which has from the beginning been asserted in

the Presbyterian church; which has been gaining ascendency; which has recently been sanctioned by the Synod of Philadelphia; which is now pending before the General Assembly; and which, as might have been expected, has greatly disturbed the peace, and threatens to bring the entire fabric of that great denomination, if not to the ground, in all probability to a schism.

These, as they have long appeared to me, are certainly great and material defects—faults—in the constitution and practice of the Presbyterian church. I have submitted to them of necessity, because I had never till recently entertained the thought of alienating myself from that connexion. I need not say, that they are features directly opposed to the character of the Episcopal church; and therefore, in these particulars, I have a decided preference to the latter. I have attained to the full conviction, that the episcopal system, in contradistinction from these elements of organization and from these practices, is altogether best.

But there are other things, appertaining to the pastoral office, prerogatives, relation, and practice, which have also come under my consideration, in my review of this great subject, having once engaged in it under the influence of misgivings, as to the expediency of maintaining my former connexion. Under this head the ground is nearly or quite common, excepting only some difference in form, between Presbyterians and Congregationalists. In church organization, or polity, it is known, that these two denominations differ materially, not to say, radically. Of course, the faults I have just noticed, growing principally out of the forms and operation of ecclesiastical polity, jurisdiction, and control, are, for the most part, wanting in the history of Congregationalism. It must be confessed, that Congregationalists are not embarrassed with an excess of law—with a uniform, received, and established code, formed into a book of statutes—enforced *verbatim et literatim* by a supervision from which there is no escape—and on principles not unlike the administration of civil courts. They have, indeed, their *Plat-*

forms—but they stand *as* platforms, so far as they are used—so far as the feet have not stepped, or slid off; but they are not brought up in the array of judicial authority to compel adherence in every item, or to exclude from communion. They are indeed quoted by the learned as precedent—as authority worthy of respect—and they are held in respect, so far as they have not been laid out of sight and forgotten. Theological teachers and other influential divines, who wield a sway over public opinion, have raised a controversy in New-England, as is well known, based on nice distinctions, of the same type with that, which at present agitates the Presbyterian church; and wanting only the power to enforce discipline on the points in question, the disputes are characterized by a zeal scarcely less ardent, than the warmth and determination of their brethren at the South. The Congregationalists at the East, as seems to me, are as much wanting in common standards, liberally maintained, as Presbyterians are removed to the other extreme of creeds in form, most rigidly supported and minutely enforced. The former contend without a conventional rule; the latter stand upon the rule, let what will come of the spirit. I pretend not to determine which is more in the right theologically—or perhaps I should say, philosophically, for a great deal of the difference is merely philosophical—but both are in the wrong practically, first, in having too much, or too little, of a common creed and of law; next, in making too much, or too little of them; and lastly, in their modes of treatment in relation to supposed and declared evils. Truth, safety, and edification lie midway between the two.

But, to the subject suggested in the opening of the last paragraph—the pastoral office, prerogatives, &c. In this capacity I have had ten years experience in the Presbyterian connexion, having filled it during that period in form; have supplied congregations an additional time of two or three years; was educated a Congregationalist, and have officiated as a clergyman in that way several transient periods. I am, perhaps, as well acquainted with one, as with the other, and do not perceive, that the

pastoral relation and prerogatives vary much between the two, if we except the form. The Presbyterian pastor has a Session of ruling Elders, associated with him for advice and pastoral government, each one of whom has an equal voice with the pastor, except that the latter is ex officio moderator. In Congregational churches, officers called Deacons, and sometimes a Standing Committee are the associate council with the pastor, and have an influence nearly or quite tantamount with that of the Presbyterian Session of Elders; but this influence is not so uniform, or so well defined, and depends more upon adventitious circumstances. It is rather the influence of men than of office; and I have known it to be carried far beyond that, which is ordinarily assumed by a Session.

The grand objection, which I have to make to these systems, so nearly alike, as ordinarily found in practice, is, that the pastoral office is robbed of its primitive, legitimate, essential, reasonable influence. If any should refuse to concede to me what is implied in the word *primitive*, I will not here insist upon it, although I think so. Or if *legitimate* is objected to, let that go, rather than raise a discussion, for which I have no space; only I would not be understood as conceding to an opponent the argument that might be based upon these terms. I dispense with them simply on the ground that it is an historical argument, which, for my present purpose, would cost more than it is worth. I purposely avoid all learned research, and design to rely upon obvious, generally admitted, practical principles—principles tested by the common operations and developments of society. Say, then, that these systems rob the pastoral office of its *essential* and *reasonable* influence.

It may happen, now and then, that a Presbyterian or Congregational pastor is too much of a man, not to acquire that influence essential to his greatest usefulness in spite of this intermediate barrier; or it may as often happen, that a session, or the deacons, or the committee, may be enlightened and reasonable enough to yield a proper influence to their pastor, and not embarrass his legitimate operations, and thus circumvent and impede

his usefulness. But it is for things in general, that we are to view such a question; it is the common results of a system, and not its exceptions, which are to be brought to the test of it.

The common talk and known confessions of Presbyterian and Congregational clergymen throughout the country, on this point, especially in their own circles, with which I am too well acquainted to be an incompetent witness, places the matter beyond a question, so far as their own experience and their sense of it may be taken in evidence. These associates in the pastoral office—for such is virtually their standing—generally claim to be wise in counsel, and they claim to have their share. Of the work, of course they do nothing. They may be honest and good men, and very pious; but in most churches they are men of little intellectual culture; and the less they have, the more confident and unbending are they in their opinions. If a minister travels an inch beyond the circle of their vision in theology, or startles them with a new idea in his interpretation of Scripture, it is not unlikely that their suspicions of his orthodoxy will be awakened. If he does anything out the common course, he is an innovator. If, from the multiplicity of his cares and engagements, he is now and then obliged to preach an old sermon, or exchange more than is agreeable, or does not visit so much as might be expected, he is lazy. For these and for other delinquencies, as adjudged by these associates, it becomes their conscientious duty to admonish him. He who is appointed to supervise the flock, is himself supervised. "I have a charge to give you," said a deacon to me once, the first time and the moment I was introduced to him, after I had preached one or two Sabbaths in the place—and, as it happened, it was the first word he said after we shook hands—adding, "I often give charges to ministers." I knew him to be an important man, and the first in the church; but as I had nothing at stake there that depended on his favour, I could not resist the temptation of replying to him in view of his consequential airs, "You may use your discretion, sir, in this particular instance; but

I can tell you that ministers are sometimes overcharged." However, I did not escape.

It seems to be a principle in Presbyterian and Congregational churches, that the minister must be overlooked by the elders and deacons; and if he does not quietly submit to their rule his condition will be uncomfortable. He may also expect visitations from women to instruct him in his duty; at least, they will contrive to convey to him their opinions. It is said of Dr. Bellamy, of Bethlehem, Connecticut, who was eminently a peacemaker, and was always sent for by all the churches in the country around, for a great distance, to settle their difficulties, that having just returned from one of these errands, and put out his horse, another message of the same kind came from another quarter. "And what is the matter," said the doctor, to the messenger. "Why," said he, "Deacon —— has—" "Has ?—that's enough. There never is a difficulty in a church but some old deacon is at the bottom of it."

Unquestionably, it is proper, wise, and prudent, for every minister to watch and consult the popular opinion around him, in relation to himself, his preaching, and his conduct. But if a minister is worthy to be the pastor of a people, he is also worthy of some confidence, and ought to receive deference. In his own proper work he may be helped, he may be sustained, but he cannot be instructed by his people; he cannot, in general, be instructed by the wisest of them. Respectful and kind hints, from competent persons, he may receive, and should court—he may be profited by them. But if he is a man fit for his place, he should receive that honour that will leave him scope, and inspire him with courage to act a manly part. A Christian pastor can never fulfil his office and attain its highest ends, without being free to act among his people according to the light of his conscience and his best discretion. To have elders and deacons to rule over him, is to be a slave—is not to be a man. The responsibilities, cares, burdens, and labours of the pastoral office are enough, without being impeded and oppressed by such anxieties as these. In the early

history of New-England, a non-conformist minister, from the old country, is represented to have said, after a little experience on this side of the water, "I left England to get rid of my lords, the bishops; but here I find in their place my lords, the brethren and sisters; save me from the latter, and let me have the former."

It has actually happened within a few years last past, in New-England, and I believe, in other parts of the country, that there has been a system of lay visitation of the clergy for the purpose of counselling, admonishing, and urging them up to their duty; and that these self-commissioned apostles, two and two, have gone from town to town, and from district to district of the country, making inquisition at the mouth of common rumour, and by such other modes as might be convenient, into the conduct and fidelity of clergymen whom they never saw; and having exhausted their means of information, have made their way into the closets of their adopted protegés, to advise, admonish, pray with and for them, according as they might need. Having fulfilled their office, they have renewed their march, "staff and scrip," in a straightforward way, to the next parish in the assigned round of their visitations, to enact the same scene; and so on, till their work was done.

Of course they were variously received, though for the most part, I believe they have been treated civilly, and their title to this enterprise not openly disputed. There has been an unaccountable submission to things of this kind, proving, indeed, that the ministers thus visited, were not quite manly enough; or that a public opinion, authorizing these transactions, had obtained too extensive a sway in their own connexion, and among their people, to be resisted. By many, doubtless, it was regarded as one of the hopeful symptoms of this age of religious experiment.

I have heard of one reception of these lay apostles, which may not be unworthy of record. One pair of them—for they went forth "two and two," and thus far were conformed to Scripture—both of them mechanics, and one a shoemaker, having abandoned their calling to

engage in this enterprise, came upon a subject, who was not well disposed to recognise their commission. They began to talk with him: "We have come to stir you up." "How is the shoe business in your city?" said the clergyman to the shoemaker, who was the speaker. For it was a city from which they came. The shoemaker looked vacant, and stared at the question, as if he thought it not very pertinent to his errand, and after a little pause, proceeded in the discharge of his office: "We have come to give your church a shaking." "Is the market for shoes good?" said the clergyman. Abashed at this apparent obliquity, the shoemaker paused again; and again went on in a like manner. To which the clergyman:—"Your business is at a stand, sir, I presume; I suppose you have nothing to do." And so the dialogue went on: the shoemaker confining himself to his duty, and the clergyman talking only of shoes, in varied and constantly shifting colloquy, till the perverse and wicked pertinacity of the latter discouraged the former; and the shoemaker and his brother took up their hats, to "shake off the dust of their feet," and turn away to a more hopeful subject. The clergyman bowed them very civilly out of doors, expressing his wish, as they departed, that the shoe business might soon revive. Of course, these lay apostles, in this instance, were horror-struck; and it cannot be supposed they were much inclined to leave their blessing behind them.

I believe I do not mistake in expressing the conviction, that there are hundreds, not to say thousands, of the Presbyterian and Congregational clergy, who will sympathize with me thoroughly in these strictures on the encroachments of the laity upon pastoral prerogative; who groan under it; who feel that it ought to be rebuked and corrected, but despair of it; and who know that their usefulness is abridged by it to an amount, that cannot be estimated. It can hardly be denied, I think, that the prevalence of this spirit has greatly increased within a few years, and become a great and alarming evil. This increase is owing, no doubt, to the influence and new practices introduced into the religious world by a certain

class of ministers, who have lately risen and taken upon themselves to rebuke and set down as unfaithful all other ministers, who do not conform to their new ways, or sustain them in their extravagant career.

It would be unjust, if it should be supposed, that I would claim for the clergy an exemption from responsibility to public opinion; that I would desire to see them independent of the people; that I would deny the popular right to choose their own pastors, and consequently to eject them mediately from their places for any good and sufficient reason. And of course this right involves the corresponding and essential prerogative of forming and expressing their opinion of a pastor in their service. But this may be done without encroaching at all upon the appropriate pastoral prerogatives. All experience of all ages and all countries proves, that a reciprocal dependance of pastor and people is most salutary for both parties and for society. All I claim for the clergy is a standing and a respect that shall secure them from the assaults of impertinence, and interpose an effectual barrier against the rage of licentiousness on the one hand, and those sudden sallies of fanaticism on the other, which cannot fail to annoy their minds, while undefended, and which too often render abortive their best endeavours to discharge their duty to the souls of men, by prostrating their influence among the people of their charge. The clergy of the United States, of all denominations, are the purest men of their class in the world; they are generally pious and faithful men, devoted to their work; they seldom ask anything more than the respect due to their office, with a competent maintenance; and it cannot be denied, that these reasonable claims ought to be awarded. Doubtless they will be. Nevertheless, there is a leaven extensively diffused through the religious community, that is opposed to them; and the tendency of which is to prostrate the appropriate standing and influence of the clergy. I hope, indeed, and pray, that this leaven may soon be ejected, or spend its energies; though I have my fears it will be lasting. I am clearly of opinion, that it will waste itself sooner by attempting a diversion of

the public mind under the operation of a religious system, uncongenial, and well-guarded against its influence, than by oppugnation; rather by relying upon the sobriety and good sense of the community, than by direct efforts at eradication. This spirit is too powerful in this and other forms, to be resisted in the ranks where it has attained such ascendency and influence. Direct opposition only invigorates it. But the sober part of the community can never—will never fall in with it; but will seek repose, and avail themselves of protection, in some form of Christianity, where they can hereafter rest secure from such invasion.

There is another serious evil in the Presbyterian and Congregational denominations, which has attained to the consequence of an active and highly influential element in these communities. I refer to the excessive amount of labour that is demanded of the clergy, which is undermining their health, and sending scores to their graves every year, long before they ought to go there. It is a new state of things, it must be acknowledged, and might seem hopeful of good, that great labours, and high devotion to the duties of the Christian ministry in our country, will not only be tolerated, but are actually demanded, and imperatively exacted. At first glance it is a most grateful feature. But when the particulars come to be inquired into, it will be found, that the mind and health-destroying exactions now so extensively made on the energies of the American clergy, particularly on these two classes I am now considering, are attributable, almost entirely, to an appetite for certain novelties, which have been introduced within a few years, adding greatly to the amount of ministerial labour, without augmenting its efficiency, but rather detracting from it. Sermons and meetings without end, and in almost endless variety, are expected and demanded; and a proportionate demand is made on the intellect, resources, and physical energies of the preacher. He must be as much more interesting in his exercises and exhibitions, as the increased multiplicity of public religious occasions tend to pall on the appetite

of hearers. Protracted meetings from day to day, and often from week to week, are making demands upon ministers, which no human power can sustain; and where these are dispensed with it is often necessary to introduce something tantamount, in other forms, to satisfy the suggestions and wishes of persons, so influential, as to render it imprudent not to attempt to gratify them. In the soberest congregations, throughout nearly all parts of the land, these importunate, and, without unkindness, I am disposed to add, morbid minds, are to be found—often in considerable numbers. Almost everywhere, in order to maintain their ground, and satisfy the taste of the times, labours are demanded of ministers in these two denominations, enough to kill any man in a short period. It is as if Satan had come into the world in the form of an angel of light, seeming to be urging on a good work, but pushing it so hard as to destroy the labourers by overaction.

The wasting energies—the enfeebled, ruined health—the frequent premature deaths—the failing of ministers in the Presbyterian and Congregational connexions from these causes, all over the country, almost as soon as they have begun to work—all which is too manifest not to be seen, which everybody feels that takes any interest in this subject,—are principally and with few exceptions owing to the unnecessary, exorbitant demands on their intellectual powers, their moral and physical energies. And the worst of it is, we not only have no indemnification for this amazing, immense sacrifice, by a real improvement of the state of religion, but the public mind on this subject is vitiated; an unnatural appetite for spurious excitements, all tending to fanaticism, and not a little of it the essence of fanaticism, is created and nourished. The interests of religion in the land are actually thrown backward. It is a fever, a disease which nothing but time, pains, and a change of system can cure. A great body of the most talented, best educated, most zealous, most pious, and purest Christian ministers in the country—not to disparage any others—a body which in all respects will bear an advantageous

comparison with any of their class in the world, is threatened to be enervated, to become sickly, to have their minds wasted and their lives sacrificed, out of season, and with real loss to the public, by the very means which prostrates them, even though we should leave out of the reckoning the premature end to which they are brought. This spectacle, at this moment before the eyes of the wide community, is enough to fill the mind of an enlightened Christian with dismay. I have myself been thrown ten years out of the stated use of the ministry by this very cause, and may therefore be entitled to feel and to speak on the subject. And when I see my brethren fallen and falling around me, like the slain in battle, the plains of our land literally covered with these unfortunate victims, I am constrained to express a most earnest desire, that some adequate remedy may be applied.

As a people we have been too fond of novelties; flushed with apparent, transient success, we have given reins to rash experiment; and the excesses and extravagances into which large portions of the Presbyterian and Congregational bodies have been pushed by ruthless hands, have thrown the air of sobriety over the modes of operation usually practised by one of the largest denominations of our fellow Christians, which twenty years ago we in our wisdom were accustomed to regard in the light of extravagance, not to say fanaticism. It is a singular fact, that the Methodists—whom I name only with respect—have in their uniform career been left far behind in all those things, which formerly were looked upon in them as great excess. Our only remedy now is to allow fanaticism to burn out its own fires by letting it alone; the fuel cannot always last; and to rely upon the good sense and sobriety of the community in a course of independent operations.

It is but a little while since I visited an insane hospital, and wandered through its cells and more public rooms. I was struck with the predominance of religious mania. Those most annoying to me, as a visiter, and who

talked the most, and would follow us as far as permitted, were of this class. They were generally innocent; but the utterance of their wild vagaries, all connected with religion, was melancholy—affecting. When I went into the male department, and mingled with a large group of the patients in one room, to some of whom I was formally introduced by the keeper, what was my astonishment on meeting there a former ministerial brother and intimate associate! He was once a settled clergyman in my own neighbourhood, highly respected for his talents, and esteemed for his exemplary Christian virtues; he had many times occupied my pulpit, and been a guest at my house; I had respected and loved him. The moment his eye caught mine he turned away. I called him by name, offered my hand, which he accepted only because he could not well avoid it. He was inclined to be taciturn. At my request he took a chair, and I seated myself by his side to talk with him. His pride was evidently touched, when, after a separation of years, our former intimacy rushed upon his mind, he found himself in my presence, and the tenant of such a place. He wept; and the tear that rolled down his cheek under an effort to suppress his emotions—as I readily apprehended the cause from his manner—suddenly roused my own sympathies, and I found myself overtaken by the same weakness. And we who, in former and brighter days—to him brighter—had rejoiced and prayed together, here, in this prisonhouse of maniacs, himself a maniac, wept together.

I asked him about his family. He shook his head, and replied, "I don't know." He had a book in his hand, kept his eyes upon it, and continued fumbling its pages. But as I had inquired about his family, he thought he must ask about mine, and did so. I said, "I have none; you know my wife is dead." "Oh, yes," said he; "but I thought you might have married again." He was reluctant, however, to engage in conversation, and I could get but little out of him. Had I not found him in that place, nor known anything of his history, I do not think that his deportment, as a stranger, would

have impressed me that he was deranged, but only disinclined to conversation.

I learned, upon inquiry, that he had been there some three or four years; that his mind had been upset in consequence of having engaged with excessive zeal in the religious excitements, which have lately characterized our country, especially in protracted meetings; that towards the close of his public career, his zeal and labours were so extraordinary, as to have procured for him in many minds the reputation of a prophet; that at last he run completely wild, and was brought to this place a perfect maniac; that for the first two or three years of his confinement he was innocent towards others, but made himself a most offensive and loathsome being, and was shockingly profane and blasphemous; but for the last six months had been gradually developing symptoms of returning sanity. "I really believe," said the keeper to me, "from his deportment towards you, that if it were in your power to visit him, he would soon be well. Can you not do so? and I will bring him out when you come, and give him the best chance." It was painful to me, that my engagements forbade a compliance with these benevolent suggestions, and yielding to this appeal. I left the hospital under the dominion of overwhelming and indescribable emotions. And is this, thought I, one of the consequences of the fanaticism, that has been raging in my native land?

This unexpected occurrence has induced me to embrace all convenient opportunities of inquiring into the different species of mania, which prevail in our insane hospitals. From personal observation, except in the scene just described, I can say little; but I am so credibly informed as for the present to rest under the conviction, that religious mania is greatly the prevalent species in the land; and a Christian gentleman of the highest respectability, intimately conversant with this subject, has told me that it comprehends a numerous class. I feel inclined to give much credence to this statement, from the recent religious history of our country, and from the known susceptibilities of our nature under those

startling and astounding shocks, which are constantly invented, artfully and habitually applied, under all the power of sympathy and of a studied, enthusiastic elocution, by a large class of preachers among us. To startle and to shock is their great secret—their power.

Religion is a dread and awful theme in itself. That is, as all must concede, there are revealed truths belonging to this category. To invest these truths with terrors that do not belong to them, by bringing them out in distorted shapes and unnatural forms; to surprise a tender and unfortified mind by one of awful import, without exhibiting the corresponding relief which Christianity has provided; to frighten, shock, and paralyze the mind with alternations and scenes of horror, carefully concealing the ground of encouragement and hope, till reason is shaken and hurled from its throne, for the sake of gaining a convert, and in making a convert, to make a maniac—as doubtless sometimes occurs under this mode of preaching, for we have the proof of it—involves a fearful responsibility. I have just heard of an interesting girl, thus driven to distraction, in the city of New-York, at the tender age of fourteen, by being approached by the preacher after a sermon of this kind, with a secretary by his side, with a book and pen in his hand, to take down the names and answers of those who by invitation remained to be conversed with. Having taken her name, the preacher asked, "Are you for God, or the devil?" Being overcome, her head depressed and in tears, she made no reply. "Put her down, then, in the devil's book!" said the preacher to his secretary. From that time the poor girl became insane; and in her simplicity and innocence has been accustomed to tell the story of her misfortune!

How far the opinion I have lately heard reiterated, of the existence of a multiplicity of cases of religious mania, originating in this manner, may be owing to an odium, naturally produced even by a few such instances—or whether facts of this kind have not yet been long enough before the public to create such an odium, I cannot pretend to say. That they are calculated to do in-

jury to the cause of religion, when viewed as the result of such a system, is sufficiently evident. I have lately seen some notices of a professedly philosophical work, written by a gentleman of the medical profession, analyzing, as I suppose, the operation, and discoursing on the results of these and other religious extravagances, and of religion generally; and favouring, as seems to be understood, the principles of deism. I have not read the book, and probably shall not, as I can easily conceive what is probably the substance of it; nor am I surprised at its production. A philosophical and skeptical mind, that is in the temper of its constitution oblique and ungenerous enough to form a judgment of Christianity from these extravagant and fanatical exhibitions, could easily, with such data, and confining investigation to this limited field, construct an argument, tending to show, that the effects of religion on the mind and general health are bad; and such, we are given to understand, is the argument of this book. Extremes beget extremes; and the late history of religion in our land is exactly calculated to produce such a book as this. The superstitions and enormities of the Roman Catholic church gave birth to what is commonly called French infidelity. The fanaticism of our country, if it should extend itself widely, and prevail long, would not probably create an infidelity so fierce, because it is not imposed by authority; but it would bring religion into general contempt.

There is yet one other objection I feel to the economy and practice of Presbyterian and Congregational churches —an objection which has been gaining strength in my mind with the increase of years: I mean the *mode* of admission to full communion.

I am aware there is not a perfect uniformity, either in one or the other of these large denominations. In both, however, the terms and mode generally prevalent are nearly as follows: In the first place, it is expected of a candidate, that he shall be able to make profession of a hope, that he has been born again—regenerated by the Spirit of God. This is a primary condition, and very

properly so, if we except the *mode* of examination and profession most in use. In the practice of nearly or quite all the churches, with which I have been acquainted, amounting to some hundreds, and scattered over the face of the land, in town and country, the candidate appears before the pastor and his session of elders, or deacons, or committee-men, as the case may be; and the first point of examination is to ascertain whether he is a child of God by regeneration. It is generally supposed, that this fact must be known to the subject by some remarkable states of mind, such as religious awakening and anxiety on account of sin; being led on from one stage of conviction to another by the Spirit of God, in the light of his truth, of which the individual must have been sensible; that the time of the new birth is especially memorable in the experience of the subject, on account of the greatness of the change, from anxiety to peace, from doubt to hope, from fear to confidence, from the unhappiness of unbelief to the joys of faith, from convictions of sin to a sense of forgiveness, from terrors of law and of eternal justice to a persuasion of deliverance from that state and to vivid and clear expectations of a heavenly inheritance, from actual condemnation in sin to actual justification by faith, &c. &c. It is supposed that the candidate can give a minute history of all these states of mind, as well as of his former unbelief and carelessness; and it is ordinarily expected. If his present life is exemplary, and consistent with a public profession of religion, though he cannot recollect such remarkable events in his own history, in whole or in particular, he is ordinarily approved and accepted; though some pastors, with their sessions, are very strict on this point, and assume, that the time, place, and circumstances of the new birth must have been manifest to the subject. This examination is more or less public, often before the whole church, any member of which is entitled to question the candidate; it being assumed, that the church is a society in close and intimate fellowship, and that every member has a right to be satisfied with the character and belief of every other member. They are supposed to be acquainted,

or to have the right of acquaintance, in all each other's feelings and views as Christians; and this acquaintance-ship is earnestly recommended.

Having been satisfied on the great point of the new birth, the candidate is then examined particularly as to his knowledge and belief in all the articles of the creed. Under this head I have always noticed, that the lay officers, and some other members, are disposed to be very particular; especially on those points which they deem most essential to orthodoxy, or which with them are favourite points; and it is remarkable how they select those, which are most difficult of apprehension, and which have most embarrassed the minds of learned theologians —as if children, youth, and other ignorant persons—ignorant in theology—could be expected to make an intelligent profession on the highest and most abstruse points of Christian doctrine! Or as if these examiners themselves were perfectly at home in such a field!

The candidate being approved, as a *theologian*, the next step is being publicly propounded on the Sabbath, from the pulpit, before the whole congregation of the people, to stand on a limited probation, whether any objections shall be made. If no objections are thrown in, which is seldom done, the candidates are called out in the most conspicuous place before the people usually present at public worship, the confession of faith is read by the pastor for their assent, article by article, and a solemn covenant is entered into, first, between the candidates and God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and next, between the church and candidates—after which the pastor publicly inducts them into full communion. If they had not been baptized in infancy, this ordinance is administered immediately before reading the covenant. Every church, thus associated, is regarded as an Ecclesiastical commonwealth, with its pastor, and session to supervise, teach, guide, and govern them; bound to watch over each other, implying the right and duty of each member to have an eye on the conduct of every other, as may be convenient; and from this association no member can be disconnected, except by a regular transfer to an-

other church; or by being formally tried and cut off for unworthy conduct; or by death. In some parts of the country there are slight variations from these terms and this mode of admission; but the principles of association are generally uniform.

To this mode I object. 1. Because it requires an extent of learning, which few persons possess, but who notwithstanding may give sufficient evidence of Christian character, and of a fitness for admission to the sacramental ordinances. It is forcing one and the same test on all minds, which in the nature of things cannot be equal—certainly not in the state of society. A common test for the moral affections—for the heart—is proper; but so high, so strong a test of mind—of intellect—is preposterous, when it is considered, that the church of Christ must be composed of such a variety of intellectual character. 2. I object to it, because, in various forms and by public exposure, it brings the feelings of candidates, which ought rather to be protected, to a painful, unprofitable, and injurious trial. The mode of examination is of this character; but more especially the coming out required before a public assembly of all the people on the Sabbath, and the professions and engagements made in that place. Few persons, especially delicate females and others not accustomed to public gaze, can pass through these ordeals, without experiencing most painful sensations of a class, from which, one would suppose, that very religion they are there required to profess, properly and kindly entertained in the hearts of those who prescribe and authorize these transactions, ought to save them. It is a violence to those proprieties, and to that composure of mind, which are desirable, and which ought to be maintained and protected in the social state. I am aware it is supposed by many, that the religious affections, warranting an approach to the Lord's table, ought to be strong enough to surmount this painful ordeal; and that it is a suitable test of Christian character. But I cannot but dissent from such a position, and am free to declare, that it seems to me a false and injurious test. 3. I object to it, because I am forced to believe, that

Christ and the members of his body, the church universal, are connected with and constituted in him only and alone through his appointed ministry; and that this mode is a constitution, or organization, superadded by man. It divides Christians into separate, and in the case of the Congregationalists, independent commonwealths; whereas the true church, in my opinion, is one and universal. Every Christian, that has been baptized and publicly recognised as such by an authorized ministry, is a member in full; and his membership is constituted solely and alone *through* the ministry; and not by association with other members. 4. I object to it, because in all states of society, the theory, on which this mode, comprehending all its parts from beginning to end, is based, is vicious in its application.

It is vicious, because it gives to laymen, under the name of elders and deacons, a pastoral supervision and authority, for which they are generally incompetent, and which always embarrasses the proper pastoral prerogative, rendering it imperfect, inefficient, and often in a great degree nugatory. A theory, that constitutes lay members authoritative examiners of candidates for admission to the ordinances, is preposterous, unless they have been educated for the ministry, and are competent to exercise its functions. For it may happen, that a candidate shall know a thousand times as much as his examiner, and not unfrequently does, except as sensible and well-educated men, wishing to connect with the church of Christ, refuse to submit themselves to an ordeal so obviously improper. Can it reasonably be expected? A pastor of a Congregational church in London, of the highest respectability for his piety and talents, told me, that in the history of his pastoral engagements, he had had many—very many hearers, who gave the most satisfactory evidence of Christian character, and who wished to join his church, but could never submit to the mode; and yet the Churches of this denomination in England have far less formidable obstacles of this kind than in America. He confessed it was a defect in the system, and he could not find fault with those who kept away on that account. He said, if he

were a layman himself, he could never submit to it, so long as the church of Christ was open to him, where this most objectionable mode could be avoided. If it be admitted, that the rich man's soul, or one who, for his superior talents, or refinement, or any other reason, takes a high rank in society, is worth as much as the poor man's soul, I know not why insuperable obstacles—to him insuperable—should be placed between him and the ordinances of Christianity, unless it can clearly be shown, that it is enjoined by Divine authority. Universally have I found this part of the constitution of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches in the way of superior and cultivated minds: First they cannot submit to such examiners; and next, they cannot submit to such a mode of entrance. Some, I know, call it—"taking up the Cross." But this is cant, and will be found only in the mouths of those persons, who themselves have so little of humility, as to aspire to an influence, with which the Head of the Church never invested them. We must take society as it is, and men as they are; we are bound to have respect to these considerations, unless the express command of Christ intervene.

Again, this theory is vicious, because it sets up Christians into independent commonwealths, and thus destroys the unity of the church. A Christian, duly received into the church, has, in my view, a right to Christian ordinances all the world over, wherever an authorized minister can be found, who sees sufficient reason in his own conscience and best discretion to dispense them to the applicant; and no lay member, or association of such members, can lawfully forbid it.

It is vicious, and false, too—I may add unscriptural —because it interferes with personal and private rights, and violates a constructive principle of Christianity, by authorizing impertinence, and setting up one member of the church over another, as a supervisor of his private conduct, when both may be strangers to each other, or whatever be their relative character and condition in society. If the principle recognised in the covenant of "mutual watch and care" were attempted to be carried

out, it would set society on fire, or rend it asunder. A man in the lowest condition of life is thereby authorized to look into the private concerns of the highest, and determine upon his conduct, and rebuke him, if he sees fit. The servant may rise to judge his master, and the maid her mistress. The son may excuse himself from his obligations of respect to his father; and the daughter may come out against her mother. None of the common and sacred relations of society could be maintained on this principle, if it be supposed, that persons in all these relations are members of the same church, associated under a solemn covenant to rebuke a fault wherever they see it, and consequently to treat every one according to his personal merits, themselves being judges, each for himself. Could any theory of society be more false—more unscriptural? The reason why it does little hurt, is because it is seldom put in practice. Society could not tolerate it for a moment.

It is vicious, also, as being defective—not only as it disappoints the ends for which it was devised—but because it makes that state of things worse, the evils of which it was designed to remedy. The grand purposes of this theory, in the minds of its inventors, doubtless, were to have an orthodox and pure church, and to bar from the Lord's table unworthy communicants. As to orthodoxy, no matter what may be the terms of admission, it will still be—"like priest, like people." The people cannot know more than what they are taught, or do better than they are instructed. The fact undoubtedly is, that not one in ten have an intelligent understanding of the creed they subscribe to and profess in such cases. It is, therefore, at best a false pretension; and cannot be other than injurious to the minds of those concerned. As to purity in the maintenance of discipline, bad members will always get in; and when once in, under such a constitution, it is next to impossible to get them out, unless their vices are most flagrant; and even then, as all experience proves, it agitates the church, destroys its peace, stands in the way of all edification for the time being, and every separate case is generally

long protracted. A hard way of getting into such a community always makes a hard way of getting out. From all my experience and observation, it is a sore and distressing evil. But let the visible connexion of Christians with their Divine Head be *through* his ministers, and through them alone—as I humbly think was the primitive constitution of the church—and its very simplicity commends it as a reasonable presumption, that it was so—and then all this fictitious machinery could not exist, to be shaken, and almost thrown to the ground, by every bad member, that happens to constitute a part of it. As to the purpose of debarring unworthy communicants by this device, every minister that has been a pastor of such a community, knows well, that he has too many of them there in spite of this pale. Nay, he knows he has them *because* of it. They have got in, and they cannot get out. They know they ought not to be there, on the principles of the association, having discovered it too late ; and so does their pastor. Besides, the pastor sees many without more worthy to have the places of many within ; but trammelled by the rules of the society, it is impossible to remedy the evil. Those without, that are worthy to be communicants, cannot come in, because they are too diffident, or too modest to make such pretensions ; and the unworthy within, must stay there, for the same reason, that the rules will not let them out The pastor ordinarily discovers and knows, that if all these barriers were thrown down, other things being equal, he could bring around the Lord's table a far more worthy class of communicants from the ranks of baptized and credible believers, by the simple use of his own proper authority, as a minister of Jesus Christ.

The system is vicious, as a whole : it embarrasses the ministry in all its forms and modes of operation, and disappoints its aims and ends ; it sets up a complicated, inconvenient, unmanageable machinery, which is hard to keep standing so as to command respect, much more to keep going so as to do good. There is virtually, as seems to me, more power exhausted on the machinery itself to keep it in order, than on the world to bring it

into connexion with it. It repulses men and women of exemplary Christian lives, who are assumed not to be Christians by the application of these terms, and are regarded and treated as belonging to the world—but whose influence is most important to the Christian cause—and sometimes more important than that of all in connexion with such an organization in a given place. It encourages and invites meddling in the affairs of others, and to sit in judgment on others' characters, by an elementary principle of the association; it deposites the ministerial and pastoral prerogative, or the disposal and control of it, in the hands of the laity, inasmuch as it can never be used without their voice expressed in assembly.

It would hardly be believed, that this system has tacitly, and to all intents and purposes robbed the Christian ministry of its distinctive and peculiar powers —viz. of keeping up the Church of Jesus Christ; for it must be admitted, that these powers, so far as the keeping up of a visible form is concerned, are in the sacraments; and the sacraments, according to general usage, are lodged in these organizations. I believe it would commonly be regarded as a violation of usage and of propriety—and of course of fundamental principle—if the sacraments should be administered independently of them. Ministers may preach where they can find hearers; but the church and its sacraments are in these associations. A pastor is not even necessary to constitute a church. This machinery has absorbed all controlling power, and the ministry is an accident. That which was first, has come to be last. It seems never to be imagined, that there is any departure in all this from apostolic usage, and that the entire order of primitive organization is reversed. Christ gave his sacraments to his ministers—to the apostles—that in the use of them they and their successors might maintain the visible forms of his kingdom. But in this system the sacraments and the control of them are held by organizations of laity, and the ministry are obliged to ask leave to take and to use them! It would be a cen-

surable irregularity, if they should presume to recover this power, to use it at their own discretion, and on their own official responsibility. It is morally impossible, as their society is now constituted in connexion with the people.

In all points of view, therefore, the theory of this system is most unfortunate in its application: the ministry is robbed of its primitive powers; virtually there is no ministry; their feet and hands are bound in chains; they are entirely subject to the popular will.

The history of this incredible change—incredible but for the fact, that stares the world in the face—is perfectly manifest. First, the reformation from Popery, in some of the forms into which it branched, went further, as all such violent changes are apt to do, than simply to reject what was bad—which was the ground of controversy—and demolished much that was good. Because the Pope, and the fictitious hierarchy, of which he was the head, had assumed too much of power, the reformation did not indeed dissolve the Christian ministry, but only rescued by scarcely saving it; and lodged it in some fragments of the Reformed Church. With some, who are nice and conscientious, not only as to the most probable primitive organization of the Christian ministry, but also as to its historical and uninterrupted descent, Presbyterian ordination is doubtful, at best; and as to myself, on a re-examination, it has proved unsatisfactory. I am inclined to the belief, that nothing but the strong bias of education, and winking at defects of argument in the pride and strength of a long-cherished opinion, can make it satisfactory. As to Congregationalism, I say it with the greatest respect for all of that denomination, with whom I have been associated, believing them to be honest as I myself was—though as it happened, I was ordained a Presbyterian*—I have

* If it be admitted, that Presbyterian ordination is valid, and Congregational not, the former in the United States is to a considerable extent vitiated by the fact, that Presbyteries have been erected and composed of Congregational ministers, if not exclusively, yet princi-

come at last to the conviction, that the Nonconformists and Independents of England broke down and dissolved the Christian ministry, so far as themselves were concerned; and consequently doomed all their descendants in the United States to the same predicament. In the contest against prelatical ascendancy, and other vices of the English church, both as an establishment and as an overstrained Episcopacy—which were grievous enough, and which are still grievous—the Nonconformists and Independents, in dissolving their connexion and seeking redress, and in the passion of the time, lost their respect for a ministry that was so unfriendly and oppressive to them, went off into an extreme, and declared against and renounced all the rights and claims of Episcopacy—resolving themselves into the original elements of society, so far as Ecclesiastical organization is concerned. Of course, if it be admitted that there must be an uninterrupted descent of the Christian ministry, it was lost as to that form, in which history attests it had previously existed. It is known that high Presbyterians do not respect the Independent, or Congregational ministry, as valid. In England, for the most part, they do not themselves respect it on account of *derivation*, but only as being *recognised* by the people. To this day, in that country, the public notices of the setting apart of Congregational ministers to their respective charges, are intentionally and uniformly expressed simply as a *recognition* —thereby formally repudiating and disclaiming the idea and rite of ordination, or consecration. In this there is no mistake, as all their public notices of the kind will show. And it is perfectly evident, that the term *recognition* is adopted as declarative of a *principle*, in opposition to consecration. This is consistent, and proves a consciousness, and is itself an open and public confession, that a descent of the ministry is not claimed,

pally; so that it may have happened, and in all probability has happened, that ministers imposing hands, as Presbyterians, for Presbyterian ordination, were every one of them ordained as Congregationalists. Though I cannot affirm, yet I suspect that such was the case in my own ordination by the Presbytery of Niagara in 1817.

and that all pretension to consecration is in principle disclaimed.

To make thorough work in this change, and to maintain consistency, the pastor is required to be a member of his own church, or association, on a footing of equality with all other members; and his superiority, as pastor, is merely nominal and influential. In principle the association can at any time degrade him, and put another member of their body--if they deem him better qualified, or if he is more agreeable to them—over his head and in his place. From such a decision there is no appeal, as all these congregations are in principle and professedly Independents—that is, independent of each other's control. Such a change, according to custom, would indeed require another *recognition* by an assembly of pastors for public purposes. But I believe it would be true to say, that this recognition, as it is always called, is a mere matter of form, to render the choice and appointment more imposing and influential—and that it is not required by any other consideration. Of course, in principle, the ministry is nothing. It originates in the popular will; it is set up and put down by the popular will; and is merely influential, as the accidents of society may favour it.

The Congregational ministry of New-England has in fact a greater importance before the public; there is what is called an *ordination* in the constitution of the pastoral relation, and in the conferring of power to administer the sacraments; and generally it is not admitted—certainly not in practice—that a church, or association of Christians, has power to make, or unmake ministers; but it is done by a council of pastors and lay delegates, which is viewed in the light of a Presbytery. As no occasion has existed in this country, as in England, for keeping up that public and formal disclaimer of a constituted ministry, above and independent of the laity, the practice has gradually gone into desuetude, and the principle into repose; and there is now a pretension at least, and generally, I believe, an admission of a ministry above,

and in some degree independent of the people. But there can be no mistake as to the origin—as to the derivation of this ministry. Though the accident of circumstances has permitted it to rise into greater importance, that consideration does not affect the history, by which it has come down, or the source from which it is derived. However, the same elementary principle is still asserted on the part of the laity, and is still in practice, viz. the pastor is considered a member of his own church, in the sense of lay membership; and many churches require a formal transfer by certificate—a public and distinct recognition of that relation at the time of ordination, or installation. In others it is assumed, as comprehended in the forms of ordination. It is evident where the practice came from; nor can there be any more doubt, that the pastor's amenability to his own church is intended to be recognised and declared. Many Congregations in New-England are so jealous on this point, as is well known, that they will never receive a pastor, without a formal acknowledgment of this principle. As much as to say—In whatever light the ordaining council, as such, view their own acts ecclesiastically, we require to have our pastor amenable to ourselves—to have and to hold him in our own power.

Ministers, who duly respect their office, ought, as seems to me, gravely to consider, whether it is suitable to submit to this requirement. It has always been a clear point with me, since I have been in the ministry, that it is wrong, and that I could never comply with it. Although it might be said, that the power here asserted by associations of laity over ministers, is not often used, it is conceding too much—too much for honesty, if the principle is not in fact conceded; and too much in any case for the safety of a minister, as his church, in the event of an unreasonable opposition, would have it in their power to ruin him. The principle asserts and claims, in the mouth of the association—He (our pastor) is one of us, and our equal. We can judge, depose, and excommunicate him. It is very likely, that this principle would not, at present, generally be interpreted

in New-England as going to the extent of deposition; and that public opinion and the sympathy of pastors for each other, in connexion with their influence, as men, would rescue a brother from such a doom. But still I think, there can scarcely be a doubt, that this practice originated in the full recognition of a principle having all this scope, and that such may still be its legitimate results, except by the barring of accidents.

Ministers—if they believe in a ministry, other than merely influential, and other than of lay origin—ought to take higher ground. It is due to themselves, to the cause, and to their Head. For myself, I have ever been accustomed to regard the Christian ministry as a distinct part of the constitution of the church—as a separate grade, having powers inherent in itself, which cannot be invaded, or impaired by lay influence; and to consider, that the act of ordination, or consecration, lifts the subject into this condition, and invests him with its appropriate prerogatives. Thenceforward, he is a member of his own body—that is, of the ministry, and amenable only to them. Of course, for a lay association to claim him as a member, and to assert power and control over him, affecting his character and standing, as a minister, is an usurpation. I do not deny, that the laity may very properly have an agency and an influence in bringing an unworthy clergyman to trial for his delinquencies before the proper authority; but only, that the laity cannot be his judges.

How, then, it possibly will be asked, could I consistently remain a Presbyterian, as the Constitution of that Church admits ruling elders to an equal voice in all its Courts, and as this class are in fact more numerous than the pastors? In the first place, the excess of ruling elders over the number of ministers in Presbytery and Synod is an accident, resulting from a deficiency of ministers to supply all the churches. Next, ruling elders are in fact co-pastors of the churches, and constitutionally have a right to that voice. And lastly, as the superior influence of the clergy, where there is no open strife between them and their associate elders of the laity, is

generally a safeguard to their own order, I have *submitted* to it, as a defect in principle beyond my control. Although I have not been blind to the imperfections of Presbyterianism, I had never, till recently, seen sufficient reasons to think of alienating myself from the connexion. In all the relations of life, it becomes our duty to bear what we cannot mend—to wait for that relief, which Providence shall open.

I suppose it is the tendency of Congregational ministers towards Presbyterianism in the forms of Association and Consociation, that has kept alive this popular jealousy, which has continued to demand, that pastors should be members of their respective churches—all, however, proving the same thing, so far as my present object is concerned. It is in this light of history, that we see distinctly the origin of the American Congregational churches, and the derivation of their ministry; and here, if I mistake not, we have a solution of all the disasters, which such an economy has brought so widely over the religious world of our country. The ministry to a great extent, has been run over and trampled under foot by fanaticism, because in its constitution and connexion with the public, it had no power of resistance. It has unwittingly connived at the destruction of its own appropriate influence, by the recognition of principles, having that tendency.

As a matter of fact, Presbyterianism itself has proved equally inefficient. It is true, no doubt, that Presbyterianism has been vitiated by the transfer and incorporation of the elements and leaven of Congregationalism into its body; and that fanaticism commenced its most frightful career in those parts of the Presbyterian Church, where the spirit of Congregationalism most prevailed.

But, although it must be confessed, that genuine Presbyterianism is rather too doctrinal and speculative to generate wildness in religion, it seems to me to have in its very constitution the elements of perpetual strife. The long-continued and invariable occurrence of an evil, under a specific system of society, may lawfully lead us to suspect

defects in its organization. It is nearly twenty years since I began to be intimately concerned in the operations of Presbyterianism. In the Church Session, so called, it being the lowest Court, composed of the pastor and his associate elders, I have always found, that the transaction of business under the rules of the Directory was embarrassing and unfriendly to edification—in cases of discipline peculiarly so. Spiritual or moral control grows, under this system, into all the formalities of civil process. Cases, which might otherwise be settled by a few words and in a short way, are found by the persons concerned to be made a subject of public record; disputes about form and the rule arise; bad feelings being excited, the right of appeal is claimed; it goes up to Presbytery, and disturbs that body; to Synod, it may be, and discomposes that; and at last it agitates the General Assembly, a body of several hundred ministers and elders collected from all parts of the United States. Scarcely a Presbytery meets, but an appeal or reference, involving much bad feeling, often the worst of passions, comes up to be tried; still more seldom does a Synod meet without such a spectacle; and never, within my recollection, has a General Assembly gone over without some painful agitation of this kind. Laws intended to secure peace and order, by a rigid construction according to the letter, are in fact the means of strife and disorder. According to all my experience and observation, it is so in the Church Session, in Presbytery, in Synod, and in the General Assembly. I believe it will be admitted by all who are competent witnesses, that debates on questions of order and on interpretations of law in application to cases, absorb a most unreasonable amount of time in all the Courts from the lowest to the highest; and that the uncomfortable feeling, which these debates excite, is the more prevailing mood of the several Courts during their sessions. As this state of things has been very public, and as I allude to it for public purposes, it cannot fairly be regarded in the light of scandal. It is a grave, and undoubtedly a suitable inquiry, as to what may be the cause; and having myself come to a sober

conviction, that it results from constitutional defects, I am not aware that it is improper to declare such an opinion in my present circumstances.

Such an uninterrupted series of facts of the same class naturally lead the mind, that is inquiring after the solution, to some theory that is adequate to produce them.

My own reasoning on this spectacle has come to this: that the Presbyterian church, from the nature of man, is an impracticable machinery;—that from a spiritual community, professing to be governed by moral influences, it has degenerated into a species of civil polity; first, by burdening itself with too much law;* next, by attempting to enforce the statutes under a literal and rigid construction in all possible forms of application, contrary to the design of Christianity, which is peculiarly a religion of *principles*, availing itself of the civil regulations of society to reform mankind by moral suasion;—and, that the equality claimed for all its ministers is the immediate occasion of its perpetual dissensions.

The last is a most material vice in the actual operation of this system, as must be evident to all minds, laying aside a consideration of the argument pending between it and Episcopacy. Refusing to invest proper persons with responsible supervisory and executive powers, to be exercised on settled and known principles, as is always found necessary in all other forms of human government, every individual claims to have an equal part in the legislative, judicial, and executive functions; and the consequence is, that every time they meet together for these purposes, they meet for dissension, as it is morally impossible

* It is a remarkable fact, in point to this statement, that the practice of law in the Presbyterian church has become so much a science and profession, that long ago reports of cases and precedents began to be published by order of the General Assembly, which have now grown to a large volume of cases, precedents, and commentaries, constantly swelling in its dimensions with every new edition, under the title of the *Assembly's Digest*. It is manifest that none but a lawyer can now understand the laws of the Presbyterian church; and yet, a minister, to be qualified for his presbyterial, synodical, and General Assembly duties, must know them. Hence every meeting of these bodies is virtually a schooling into the knowledge of law, without ever attaining to it. They are just enough *in* the law not to be skilful, but always in difficulty.

it should be otherwise. It is not in man to govern himself in this way; it never was, and never can be. Suppose, for illustration, that besides the legislative functions of the Congress of the United States, they should attempt to discharge the duties of the judiciary and the executive: it would be utterly impossible that government should go on in this way. And yet this is the way of the Presbyterian church: every meeting of its constituted authorities is a parliament, every parliament is a judiciary, and every judiciary is an executive; and the consequence is, that each and all become an arena of perpetual strife.

But the most impracticable principle of the whole organization, is the preposterous attempt to enforce a multitude of minds to think *exactly* alike on every point of Christian doctrine. It is assuming a theory which is entirely and universally false. Such an agreement never was, and, it may be presumed, in this world, never can be. This, certainly, is the theory of the leading and most influential minds of the Presbyterian church, if we are to judge from past history and present developments; and consequently and necessarily it must doom the body to perpetual and endless strife. They may divide the Presbyterian church, as is likely soon to occur; but, on the same principles, a division can never purchase peace. They may subdivide, but the inherent defects of constitution will still be there, and in all probability will again break out in the same forms.

It will be apparent that such an operation and uniform result of a given organization is a disappointment and subversion of the aims and ends of the Christian church. It destroys peace, creates discord, prevents edification, keeps in constant and wide-spread agitation cases of painful discipline, and thus forces scandal on the public eye; provokes and nourishes endless controversy about doctrine; exasperates individuals, and irritates the public mind; occupies all, to a great extent, on a public arena of strife, and thus diverts them from the appropriate duties and aims of the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, and as a natural and unavoidable result, prevents

and blights the growth of individual piety, and retards, no one can tell how much, the public and general interests of religion.

The present state of the Presbyterian church, in connexion with its past history, is a public and painful proof of the statements and reasonings I have here recorded. Churches are divided ; Presbyteries are divided ; Synods are divided ; the General Assembly is divided; and the whole denomination, composed of more than 2000 ministers, nearly 3000 churches, more than 250,000 communicants, having allied to them a population falling probably not much short of 2,000,000, is in violent agitation and conflict with itself—party against party—all originating from two great and leading facts, totally unlike, uncongenial, and meeting, as extremes frequently do, not in this instance for coincidence, but for collision. It is extreme looseness in doctrine and practice on the one hand, and a violent attempt to coerce it into orthodoxy and order on the other. The first seems to me the natural result of such an organization, when the body gets to be large ; and the last an impracticable theory applied to remedy the evil, but doomed apparently to produce only concussion and dissolution. The fermentations of the whole mass work their way to the floor of the General Assembly, and there develop annually the true character of the ingredients in their relative combination and reciprocal action. The controversies of that body are too well known to require a history in this place, and too painful to be useful in a detailed portraiture. And yet, from the important position of that body in society, and from existing facilities of obtaining and recording the debates of public assemblies, they are notwithstanding spread out before the wide community, to the great scandal and detriment of religion. If all their debates could be held with closed doors, till peace should be restored—if that can ever be hoped for—it would seem most desirable.

The great diversity and not unfrequent extravagance

of creeds, introduced into the Presbyterian and Congregational connexions, is a sad, and for anything I can see, an irremediable evil. I mean the creeds of every several commonwealth or church. I am aware that the *principle* of the Presbyterian church of the United States is, that all its separate organizations or congregations, shall adopt and subscribe to the creed of the Directory, as determined and ordered by the General Assembly; but such is not the *fact;* and the Congregations have too much independence to conform to that rule, where they have not done it from the beginning. All the Congregational churches of New-England are associated under such articles of faith as were drawn up for them, or offered by the clergyman who originally organized them into a body, except as in some instances they have been remodelled. The same is the fact extensively through the bounds of the Presbyterian denomination. The diversity cannot, I think, be less than some hundreds; and each one is shaped, with minute exactness, according to the theological model of the head that formed it, as a Hopkinsian, as a New light, as a moderate or high Calvinist, as an Old or a New school man, with all the grades between these extremes, from the time of Jonathan Edwards down to this present; and some of them far higher and far lower than either of these. From the known scrupulosity of divines of these two great denominations in all such matters, it cannot be a subject of surprise, that this great variety of creeds should be guarded and defended on certain points, most dear to the authors, in a manner somewhat extravagant and impressive. Such, in a great diversity of instances, have I found them to be. At one time I have been pleased; at another, amused; at another, astonished; at another, mortified. One can hardly go from one town to another, although he is in the same denomination, without finding a different creed, unless he may happen to fall into the track of a minister or missionary, who organized several churches, and of course gave to each the same; though I have actually found them varying, even in such a case, on former missionary ground in the west-

ern parts of New-York. I have myself organized some ten to fifteen churches, giving them creeds drawn up by my own hand, which varied from each other, according as by more thinking on the subject I supposed I could improve their forms.

The last time I ever officiated in reading the confession and covenant to a candidate, who stood up before the congregation to be received by that formality into full communion, it was so extravagant in both these principal parts, that I really felt as if I could never do the like again with a good conscience. I thought that every one who heard must feel, that these professions and engagements were unsuitable, not so much for the doctrine of the confession, or the nature of the covenant, as for the excessive overstraining, and, as it appeared to me, extravagance of the form. It seemed as if the purpose of the instrument was to go as much higher in pretension, as everybody knew the person subscribing to it must come short of in life, and thus balance the account.

How different this from the practice of a Church, which has the same creed throughout the land, and that creed in every man's, in every woman's, and in every child's hand!

It may, perhaps, be thought, that a part of my statements respecting the theory of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches is too comprehensive to be fully appreciated, without more explanation.

With regard to the ministry, it can hardly be mistaken, that, independent of any higher claims than considerations of expediency, I am disposed to regard Episcopacy, or an organization based upon that principle, as the best form of church polity and government. But that I shall treat of in the proper place. As yet, and so far as relates to this point, I have only been engaged in showing, that Presbyterian organization is defective, as proved by experiment, and as a consideration of its theory, in application to human nature and society, might lead us to expect. It seems to be apparent, that it has

in it the germ of perpetual strife. Universal parity, claiming in the Church Session, in Presbytery, and in Synod original rights of supervision and control, each in its own appropriate field, and to a certain extent uniting the combined powers of legislation, of a Judiciary, and of an Executive authority, must necessarily want that harmony of action, which the responsible investiture of particular individuals is calculated to secure in the office of administration. I say—uniting the powers of legislation, &c., because, that, notwithstanding the General Assembly is the legislature in principle, and for the great summary of fundamental statutes, is so in fact; yet each of the inferior courts legislates in a thousand minor details for its own jurisdiction; and is, therefore, as I have before stated, at the same time virtually a Parliament, a Judiciary, and an Executive power. The General Assembly is pre-eminently so; and although it is a representative body, immediately from the Presbyteries, the principle of ministerial parity prevails there, as elsewhere. Consequently, in all parts and ramifications of the Presbyterian organization there is wanting a head; and of course wanting that harmony of action, which such an authority, invested with specific powers, on recognised principles, and made responsible for the use of them, is in all conditions of society essential to produce. Nowhere in the Presbyterian church, in any one of its bodies, or combined parts, is there a head—if we except the transient and extemporaneous office of a moderator. Even the pastor is not a head in fact, although he is nominally so; inasmuch as the voice of each ruling elder is by the constitution equal to his, and they together can always overrule him. Such an organization, therefore, always has in it the essential elements of collision; and the uniform result, as actually developed, is no disappointment, but a fulfilment of its tendencies.

Congregationalism is in principle no Ecclesiastical organization at all; but was first got up in England, as its name imports, and as is there still rigidly maintained, for the purpose of Independency. The only organiza-

tion it tolerates is that of each association of Christians, who worship together. As before shown, the ministry is merely nominal and influential. The system of Congregationalism in Connecticut has approximated towards Presbyterianism. Of course it cannot be any better in the view now under consideration. It is undoubtedly true, as before recognised, that the Congregational ministry of New-England have attained to a more commanding relative position, than their prototype of England.

But it is the class of associations, commonly called churches, and well known under that name; it is their nature, and the power claimed by them, as the depositories of the Christian Sacraments, and as claiming control over membership in Christ's visible body, to admit, reject, and excommunicate; in other words, as claiming and using the fundamental and most important powers of the Christian Church;—it is these organizations, which have seemed to me, though not in fact an historical anomaly, yet really so, under a right view of primitive practice, and of the design of Christian institutions.

On this footing the Presbyterian and Congregational churches of the United States are in most particulars uniform. How it has been possible for organizations of this kind to wrest from the Christian ministry their appropriate and peculiar prerogatives—viz. of keeping up the visible Church of Christ by baptism, and administering the holy Eucharist to whomsoever, in their conscience, in their discretion, and under their official responsibility, they shall deem incumbent upon them, at such time and place, as may seem to them proper and expedient, without consent, advice, or control of the laity—I confess I could never resolve, except in the light of that history, which opens to us the causes and the agency, which first broke down the Christian ministry in certain of the Protestant ramifications, and then usurped its powers.

Common sense would teach us what ought to be and what are the powers of the ministry; and common opinion, even among those who actually withhold them, supposes that they are such as these. They would not believe, if they were told, what they are doing, until it

should be explained to them. Why, then, it may be presumed, they will give it up. Oh no—that is not so easy. But still they will not believe it. They take for granted, that their own ministry is in the possession and use of all these powers, because they are aware it is proper.

For the present, I only propound for consideration the two following opposite theories:—First, that of the customary organization of Presbyterian and Congregational churches, holding control over membership and the sacraments, with a consideration of the usual embarrassments and difficulties, that attend it;—such as a mode of admission, that cannot keep out the unworthy, even by the closest scrutiny; which excludes and repulses many that ought to come in;—an organization which threatens, and often disturbs the peace of society, by authorizing every member to overlook the private conduct of his neighbour, in the covenant of mutual watch and care; which always finds it difficult to maintain tranquillity and order; which shakes the church to its foundation by almost every case of discipline, and these not unfrequent, if the church be numerous; which cannot get rid of a bad member, disposed to make trouble, without in some instances threatening the existence of the body; which always has more or less of scandal resting upon it in the eyes of the world, and often not unjustly; and which for all these and many other reasons of the kind, is in the way of a blessing on the world around, rendering it at least problematical, whether the evil it does is not greater than the good, in comparison of what might be accomplished, if this system were out of the way.

Next, I would propose for consideration the other theory:—That the ministry should be left in possession of its primitive and legitimate powers, viz. of dispensing the sacraments on their own official responsibility; that the pastor over any given Congregation should "preach the word," "be instant," that is ready for all pastoral emergencies, "in season, and out of season;" that he should baptize at his own discretion, he being supposed to understand his duty in this particular, and conscien-

tious; that he should admit persons to the holy communion also on his own discretion, having duly instructed and prepared them, and found them proper candidates; that it should be *his* duty to watch over the flock, "to reprove, rebuke, and exhort," and not *theirs* to overlook each other for these purposes, except as certain relations in life, such as parents, masters, guardians, intimate friends, and some others adventitious, might warrant, and render it safe and hopeful of good; and that he should instruct all, guide all, preside over all, so far as his proper ministerial and pastoral functions may be considered as legitimately extending. In this way the members of Christ's body sustain their visible connexion with him *through* his ministers, and through them *alone*. All that other factitious machinery, so difficult to be kept in order, so hard to be worked to advantage, so prolific of discord and scandal, so detrimental to a pastor's influence and efficiency, and to a great extent a stumblingblock to the world around, would be wanting. It could not be found, and consequently nobody could find fault with it. It could do no hurt positively, or negatively. And yet all Christians could enjoy their privileges: Christ's church and its ordinances would be open to them; the pastor could avail himself of all the helps to be found among his own people, to act under his advice and supervision, and not he under theirs; every mode of doing good, that is proper in any case, might be adopted in this, and every available talent among Christians put to use. The pastor might have his own adopted advisers, and consult them, as he might feel the want of their counsel; but they should not be his governors. He might have a board to supervise and manage all needful secular concerns, as in other cases is provided for by statutes and ordinances of civil Government.

Now, set this theory down, as opposed to the former, and let any sober and enlightened man say—under which of the two, such a ministry, as that which is generally found in the Presbyterian and Congregational connexions, would be likely to accomplish the greatest good, under the same forms of worship now in use among

them? Under which of the two would any good and faithful ministry be likely to do the greatest good, other things being equal? If the answer to this question be obvious—as I think it must be—and obviously in favour of the second theory proposed, the question is settled against the expediency of the first. The first is complicated, inconvenient, unnatural; it is not adapted to man as he is, nor to society as we find it;—while the second is simple, practicable, and naturally works into society in all its forms. There is no possible good, that can be done under the first, in given circumstances and by given agents, which may not be done under the second in the same circumstances and by the same agents; and under the second the grievous and necessary evils of the first may be avoided. And withal a scope is still left open, and a power still remains, under the latter, of extended usefulness, the amount of which cannot be estimated, all which the former for ever bars by its inherent defects.

It is proper to remember, that these two theories are thus set forth in comparison, and supposed to be applied, where all other things, which are not necessarily inherent in the peculiar character of each, are equal; and it is in this view only, that they can be properly appreciated.

I anticipate, that, admitting a community *with* a pastor could do better under the application of the second theory, the question might be raised—what would become of them *without* a pastor? I answer—they would still have the advantage even in that case. Christians of leading influence and character would naturally take their appropriate positions, as the exigencies of the community might demand; and society would pay them far greater deference, as may easily be imagined, than would be rendered to a set of men, who perhaps could advance no other title for influence, than that of having long time filled an official station without honouring it; or at least without discharging its duties in a manner useful and agreeable to the public. It is Christian virtue and a talent for usefulness, which are best fitted for such a time —without which the application of the first theory would

not simply be inefficient, but injurious—and with which the second would still be more desirable. The official lay authorities of such a community, whatever might be their denomination, and the people themselves would naturally feel more the importance of obtaining a pastor, than when all is left to a set of Deacons or Elders, who often deem themselves competent to fill that place. Moreover, the church in such a case could not be shaken, nor its existence put in peril; because it would have no organization liable to such an accident. Whenever a pastor should be provided, he would find in every Christian of such a community a member of the Church universal, whose relation had not been and could not be disturbed, except by his own misconduct; neither could the fault of one member affect the privileges and standing of another, except through the medium of a personal influence.

Inasmuch as the covenant of "mutual watch and care," so generally in use in Presbyterian and Congregational churches, is in common opinion of their members deemed an important element of their constitution, and supposed to have scriptural authority, having myself objected to it so strongly, it may seem to claim from me a separate and more particular consideration.

It is supposed to have scriptural authority, first, from the injunctions so frequently made and so emphatically urged by Christ and the apostles to love and union among Christians; and next, specific rules, such as—"If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault, &c.;" "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others;" and sundry other passages of this class, of which, it must be allowed, these specimens are most direct and emphatic.

With regard to the first and others to the same point, given by our Saviour and the Apostles, it will be seen, that they relate exclusively to *private* offences; and the rules affixed to them are a mere repetition and sanction of the common practices of society in such cases, making them incumbent, with this difference of manner and ob-

ject—that it should be done in the spirit of kindness and forgiveness, for the sake of bringing an offending brother to a proper state of feeling; whereas the common object of unsanctified and worldly men is to show their spirit of resentment, perhaps to carry out a quarrel to an extreme, putting on the airs of self-importance and independence, making irritating charges, imperatively demanding reparation, and with "men of honour," falsely so called, sometimes leading to bloodshed. But not so is it permitted to Christians. This rule of Christ can never be legitimately applied to cases of fault, which have no more relation to us personally, than to others, or to the public.

As to the injunction of Paul—"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others," and others of this kind, it is a mere exhortation—mandate, if you please—to benevolence; and has no respect to calling others to account for faults, or to a supervision of their private conduct. The connexion in which it stands will show this, and the very next word is an illustration of the injunction, by adducing the highest exemplification of benevolence, which the universe affords: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," &c. It is an injunction to benevolence of the highest order, having respect not only to the temporal relief, comfort, and happiness of others, but especially to the salvation of their souls.

But it is said, St. James enjoins—"Confess your faults one to another." I need not say, that the Roman Catholics claim this, as prescribing auricular confessions; and they, doubtless, have as good a right to it for this purpose, as those whom I now oppose have for theirs. It is a violent wresting of Scripture in both cases. Where Christians are sufficiently intimate, it is a salutary rule; and was no doubt intended for such cases; but by no fair interpretation can it be made to authorize an inquisition into the private conduct of our neighbours.

The passage in Leviticus—"Thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him"—is evidently a direction to a civil magistrate, as in the verse

but one preceding :—" Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment," &c.

Moreover, the negative of this claim to supervise the affairs of others, can be established, not only by constructive applications, but by direct and positive injunctions of Scripture :—" Whatsoever ye would, that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." But—" we would that our brother should teli us our faults"—say some of these persons. I answer, that this is a rare attainment, and that the rule is intended for the common feelings of mankind. Christ says expressly, pointedly, emphatically—" Judge not, that ye be not judged," &c. " Why beholdest thou the mote," &c. " Thou hypocrite," &c. He knew, that persons, who think themselves better than others, but knowing not themselves, would be inclined this way ; and therefore he rebuked this disposition, and branded it with the name of hypocrisy.

One of the most inconsistent and troublesome vices among Christians of Apostolic times was—meddling and impertinent interference, both of men and women ; and I am sorry to say, more especially of the latter ; as is evident from the Epistles. St. Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus are specific and minute in allusion to this evil, and contain injunctions against this vice in its various forms. They make a melancholy development of scandal on this point ; but it is truth, and the Bible is always honest. To the Thessalonian Christians he said. " Be quiet, and do your *own* business." To Timothy he enjoined, that even a bishop should " not be a brawler," nor their wives " slanderers ;" the proper interpretation of which doubtless is—that they *especially* should not be guilty of these faults. But it involves the converse. " Refuse profane and old wives' fables ;" " let them," widows, " learn first to show piety at home ;" " the younger refuse . . . . because they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house ; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not ;" " against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses," showing that tattling and slan-

der was a vice of the time; "let servants under the yoke honour their masters;" "obey magistrates;" "wives, submit to your husbands;" "shun profane and vain babblings;" "in the last days .... there shall be .... false accusers &c. .... having forms of godliness, &c. .... of this sort are they who creep into houses, and lead captive silly women;" "there are many unruly and vain talkers, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses;" let not "aged women be false accusers," and let "the young be discreet and keepers at home;" "speak evil of no man—be not brawlers;" &c. "The tongue," says the Apostle James, "is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison; a fire—a world of iniquity;—it setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell."

Nothing can be more clear, than that Scripture authority against meddling, tattling, slander, scandal—or in any way interfering with the private concerns, conduct, and character of our neighbours, except as civil, or ecclesiastical authority has clothed us with legitimate powers—is specific, abundant, decided, emphatic. It is founded in human nature; it is essential to the peace of society; a departure from it would be ruinous to social comfort. If, therefore, it is proper to introduce any rule on this point into a mutual church covenant, it seems to me, that the converse of that which is usually found in that place, ought to be substituted. Even the apostles, as we have seen, found it necessary to rebuke the disposition prevalent in their time to meddle with the affairs, and to make inquisition into the conduct of others. But it should be recollected, that the condition of Christians and the state of society then were widely different from the same things with us. Christianity was a new religion, and its disciples were generally obnoxious. They were compelled by their circumstances to associate most intimately; they were bound together by those sympathies and ties, which a persecuted and suffering class always feel, independent of Christian affection. Hence in part we account for the holy and exemplary ardour of their attachments to their religion and to each other. But even in these circumstances and under these especial in-

timacies—or rather, perhaps, on account of them—the apostles found it necessary to admonish them against the abuse of that confidence so generally felt and reciprocated by those, who confessed Christ in those unhappy times—an abuse so naturally developed in the form of meddling and private inquisition.

But the state of the Church in Christian nations of these days is very different; and there is far less apology for this vice among Christians now, than in those times. And, moreover, it cannot so easily be tolerated now. Professors and nonprofessors of religion, in the present highly civilized state of Christian nations, stand upon a common level in the enjoyment of civil rights; and the lives of many of the latter class are as exemplary, in a religious view, as those of the former. Nearly all, professors and nonprofessors, assert and claim, and very justly, the enjoyment of all private rights; and an exemption from the impertinent supervision of their neighbours, whether it respects their private affairs, or their private conduct. Professing Christians will not consent to such interference even of their fellow Christians; and there is no good reason why they should. It is the most unprofitable and obnoxious business, which any persons can set themselves about. It may be added, that in these days and in our country, where Christians are so numerous and people generally respect religion, many of whom being as decent in their lives as professors themselves, it is impossible that the body of Christians should be very distinct and disjunct from the rest of the community. It is equally impossible, in the midst of a dense population, that the members of the same church, if many, should be so intimate, as in the primitive age; that they should all even know each other personally; and they, who think it is possible, and a duty, adopt an impracticable theory. My next door neighbour in a city might be a member of the same church with myself, and yet it is possible I should be ignorant, whether he be a Christian, or a Jew, or a Mohammedan, because I do not know him at all. How preposterous, then, is it, that I should be his guardian, and he mine, even if it were proper, simply

because we happen to be members of the same church! The spirit of the primitive Church, in all that was good, is what we want; the circumstances we cannot have.

Let it not be supposed, that I would take the responsibility of discouraging the efforts of private Christians to do good by all proper, well-advised, and discreet methods. I trust I shall ever sympathize thoroughly in any suitable plans devised and adopted for developing and bringing into action all the various talents of the Christian Church, and making them to bear on the great design of Christianity for the conversion of the world. I only have reference in these remarks to a specific and acknowledged evil, which unfortunately has received the sanction, at least in form, of a large body of Christians—apparently and most probably from an unwarrantable interpretation of certain historical and preceptive portions of Scripture.

CHAPTER II.

Consideration of the common and popular Objections to Episcopacy and to the general Economy of the Episcopal Church.

Episcopacy is found in a variety of forms over the Christian world, of which the Roman church is most eminent; next to that, the Greek church; next, the church of England; and next, the Episcopacy of the United States. The American Methodists are under a form of Episcopacy; and so are the Moravians, or United Brethren. There are some other forms of Christian organization, which have the semblance of Episcopacy; and numerous Christian institutions, in our own country and elsewhere, as I shall have occasion to show, are under the control of the Episcopal principle. Nearly, or quite all of our voluntary religious and benevolent societies are of this last class.

The Roman and Greek churches run nearly parallel in their general design and structure. But the features of the church of Rome are more before the world. They are gigantic and imposing; and for the powers it has usurped and employed, it has been terrific. At present it lies under the ban of the public opinion of the civilized world, so far as its former usurpations and abuse of power are concerned. The Protestant world, as is well known, has declared off, renounced connexion, and disclaimed all responsibility in its arrogance and abominations. As a subject of history it is interesting and awful to contemplate. The Pope is the great hierarch, and a temporal prince; his college of cardinals are his council, and the aristocracy of his realm; the archbishops are an intermediate grade and connexion of the priesthood; the bishops another; and the numerous orders of inferior ecclesiastics of this stupendous hierarchy fill up the complement between the papal throne and the people

of that numerous—most numerous—and wide-spread communion. The vast economy of this notable Episcopate is principally of human invention—a great political institution, whose powers, concentrated in Rome, and emanating thence, have made the kings of the earth tributaries, have trod upon the necks of abject princes, and made Christendom what it was three centuries ago; since which time, under Protestant influence, and that infidelity which its own enormities created, the power of Rome has waned, and is waning, to set and rise no more. The church of Rome is duly appreciated; and a proper estimation of its grievous corruptions of Christianity, and of its usurpations and abuses of power, still leaves room for all that respect for the Protestant churches, which they can fairly claim, and for all that is desirable. They are not responsible for anything, but what they are and what they do. The declared object of their secession was to cut off and purge away what was bad, and retain what was good; but the church of Rome is the parent of them all. If one is vicious on that account, so is another; but no wise and fair jury would bring in a verdict against a child for the sin of its parent—the imputers of Adam's sin to his posterity excepted, admitting that they are wise and fair. At any rate, Protestants are not sufficiently orthodox in this case of their own, to confess for the sins of popery. They disclaim responsibility—they renounce, they abjure all connexion, all allegiance—and eschew all sympathy. And the world, being jurors, have acquitted them. Let not any man, then—above all, let no Protestant Christian—be so unworthy as to declaim against Episcopacy, because it came down through the church of Rome. In doing that, he sets the seal of condemnation on his own forehead. The argument would be equally good against the Bible—against Christianity, and everything that belongs to it. An *argumentum ad invidiam* is unworthy of any fair mind—it is proof of a bad heart—it is the mark of baseness. And yet, how often is it used against Episcopacy, because Popery is an Episcopacy! But we shall see

by-and-by, who are Episcopalians openly and fairly, and who covertly, though I will not say unfairly.

The church of England, the immediate parent of the Episcopal church of the United States, is an overstrained Episcopacy, having archbishops attached to it. It is vitiated, also, as being connected with the state, and in a measure under its control. The American Episcopal church may and ought to be regarded, as a reformation of the parent stock in both these particulars—as is the fact. She is also reformed and expurgated from all those adventitious and unhappy results, which in England flow from a union of church and state.

An attempt to bring odium on the American Episcopal church, because her parent is connected with the state in Great Britain; or because the English church has archiepiscopal sees, is as unworthy as to charge her with the sins of popery; and the argument bears with equal force—which it must be confessed is no force at all—against the American Presbyterian church, because her parent is the established church of Scotland; or against the New-York Dutch Church, because her parent is the established religion of Holland; or against the Lutheran church of Pennsylvania, because hers is connected with the state in Germany; and so on. There are too many involved in this species of guilt, that any with their eyes open, or with a conscious self-respect, should be likely to tolerate such an argument.

The American Episcopal church, by common consent —certainly in all reason—stands acquitted, first, of the sins of popery; and next of the vices and responsibilities of the English establishment, as a political institution; and is to be judged on her own merits. She stands forth to the world under what she asserts and claims to be the simple, pure, primitive, apostolic form—an Episcopacy, with three orders of clergy, under the common denominations of Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons.

The ecclesiastical organization of American Episcopacy is as follows:—A general triennial Convention, constituted in two houses, viz. the house of Bishops, and the house of clerical and lay deputies, is invested,

by a constitution adopted in 1789, and since amended, with powers of general legislation, supervision, and control—legislation being supposed to involve the last two attributes. The body, however, is purely legislative. Every bishop is ex-officio a member of the upper house; and the lower house is composed of a representation of the clergy and laity from each diocess, not exceeding four of each class. The deputation of any one diocess can at will divide the lower house on any question, by requiring the clerical and laical votes to be declared separately—the decision to be based on a majority of suffrages in each order, provided such a majority comprehend a majority of the diocesses represented—the votes of each diocess, and of each order separately, be they more or less, counting as one in a case of division. There must be a concurrence of both houses for authenticated acts. Consequently, either house may be a check upon the other; and the laity of the lower house may be a check upon the clergy of the same house, and mediately upon the house of Bishops.

The Bishops of the several diocesses are elected according to rules adopted by the convention of each diocess, and are consecrated by a Bishop, with at least two to assist him. No Bishop can perform Episcopal functions in another diocess, without the consent of the Bishop thereof; or in case of vacancy of the Episcopal chair, he must be authorized by invitation. Bishops and clergymen are amenable to the court erected by the convention of each diocess for the trial of their own Bishop and their own clergy, in case of delinquency. At the trial of a Bishop there must always be one or more of the Episcopal order in court. A sentence of degradation on a Bishop, Presbyter, or Deacon, can only be pronounced by a Bishop.

The Convention of the diocess of New-York is composed of the Bishop, who is ex-officio president; of the clergy, who have pastoral charge, or who may be missionaries; of clergy, who are officially connected with literary institutions; and of lay delegates, of one or more, from the vestry of each congregation. The clergy

and laity of the convention deliberate in one body on all questions that come before them. The votes of the clergy count one for each; of the laity, one for each congregation represented; and a majority of the votes of the two orders jointly are decisive, except when any five voices shall require the two orders to vote separately, when a majority of each is necessary to a decision. The choice of a bishop is always by division, as aforesaid.

I know not, whether these are fair specimens of the elementary principles, adopted for the government of the other Diocesses in the United States; but presume they are.

The number of Diocesses in this country at present is 22; of Bishops 17—one being a Missionary Bishop; of Clergy 772; and of congregations probably from 800 to 900—590 being reported for 12 Diocesses. Communicants in 19 Diocesses 36,416—in all probably about 40,000.

Here, then, we have the entire array of the Episcopacy of the United States, and of the fundamental principles of its Ecclesiastical organization.

1. The first of the common and popular objections urged against this system, which I propose to notice, is—its power—dangerous power. It might, perhaps, be sufficient to reply, that if those who have adopted it and placed themselves under it, are satisfied with it—it is enough, inasmuch as all who come into connexion with it, do it with their eyes open. The argument in proof of this imputation, however, must, I think, be made out in this way: The Episcopacy of Rome is powerful and dangerous; and so is the Episcopacy of England; therefore, the American Episcopacy is powerful and dangerous. As the entire portraiture of the last, with its principles of organization and government, has just been laid down on these pages, I may, perhaps, be warranted to say, that the above reasoning from Papal and English Episcopacy is what is called in the forum—a *non sequitur*. For those not learned the version is—*It does not follow*. All who have eyes can see for themselves

what the picture of American Episcopacy is, as I have drawn it; and I hold myself responsible for its fairness.

It is powerful and dangerous?—Well, then, let us make a few comparisons. There is the Methodist Episcopacy of the United States under six Bishops, which in 1834 had under its care 2,458 clergy, and 638,784 communicants; and a population associated with them of three or four times the number of communicants—say 2,000,000—and yet, as an ecclesiastical organization, the laity have no voice in their counsels. The Bishops and clergy preside over all, and manage all, with no check from the popular ranks. I do not make this statement to find fault. If the Methodists are content, it is nothing to me, or to any one else, that does not belong to them. My only object is to determine facts, and to exhibit them in the light of comparison. By the Constitution of the American Episcopal Church, the laity are not only admitted to an equal footing in debate and in counsel on all questions of legislation and government, but they have a check on the clergy, and through the clergy on the Bishops; for the House of Bishops can enact nothing independently of the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies; and the latter House can vote nothing without a concurrence of the laity. Besides, the Bishops of the Episcopal Church are elected by a convention, composed of clergy and lay delegates on a footing of equality. In the Methodist connexion the laity have no representation in the government of the community, except in the persons of the clergy, who, for the most part, are first licensed by a board of laymen. The laymen also, as must be confessed, have a very influential check in the control of money matters. In some instances, I believe, congregations are allowed to have an influence in the choice of their preacher. But in no instance can a pastor be imposed on an Episcopal Church by the Bishop, without a call from the congregation through a vestry of their own choice. I do not say, that the Methodist Episcopal economy is not good, or best for them. Unquestionably, however, it has in it all the elements required for prompt, deci-

sive, and energetic action. Its history demonstrates the wisdom of its founder. In less than a hundred years, it has grown from nothing to be, if I mistake not, the largest Protestant denomination in the world, including all of different countries, and if we estimate by the number of communicants. It is clear, however, that the American Episcopal Church, in its constitutional organization, is not to be compared with the Methodist, if we confine our view to the concentration of power in the clergy. The former in this particular is an exact type of the Presbyterian Church. The Constitution of each gives to the laity an equal voice with the clergy, and a check upon all their doings. Of the two, the Episcopal Church is more favourable to a predominant influence of the laity, inasmuch as, in General Convention, the deputation from any one diocess can call the entire ranks of the laity into a separate vote, a majority of whom can give their veto on any measure.

In the Constitution of the Methodist Church, therefore, all the ecclesiastical power is in the hands of the clergy; and in the Episcopal Church the clergy of the three orders combined have actually less power in relation to the laity, than the Presbyterian. So much for these comparisons.

Let it not be supposed, that by these statements, I am willing to excite any jealousy, or prejudice, against the Methodist Episcopacy and clergy. Nothing can be farther from my heart. On the contrary, I am prepared to express my high respect for the clergy of that denomination, and to bear a conscientious testimony to their fidelity to their principles, and to their work. They have from the beginning carried out and executed the designs of their founder; and so far as I know—and I have had abundant opportunities of observation both in America and in England—they are worthy of all that confidence, which they have so well earned, and which their own people are accustomed to repose in them. It cannot even be brought to their charge, that they have innovated on the original system by grafting upon it an Episcopacy, which is generally supposed not to have been in the de-

sign of Wesley, and which is not to be found over that connexion in England, under the same name. The truth is—Wesley always considered himself and his people under the Church of England, so far as that Church was willing to acknowledge them; and the Wesleyans of that country have not to this day declared themselves Dissenters. They are now beginning to be claimed by the Established Church. Wesley's object in abstaining from setting up an Episcopacy was, doubtless, to place no obstacle in the way of a return. We have reason to suppose, that he considered himself and his societies, Ecclesiastically, under the Church of England—and of course under an Episcopacy. The American Methodist Church, therefore, has only supplied the defect of its own system, in existing circumstances, by adopting the supervision and government of bishops. For talent, for indefatigable industry, for energy, and for piety, the American Methodist Clergy have earned a most creditable distinction. And I, certainly, would be one of the last to detract aught from the honours, that are due to them. My only object is to show, that there is no foundation for the insinuation, that there is an unreasonable, or dangerous power, usurped and employed by American Episcopacy; and that there are no such tendencies in its constitution; but on the contrary, that it has designedly permitted, nay, by its own hands put an insurmountable barrier in the way, by incorporating with itself a full balance of popular and lay influence. Although this argument might easily be made out without passing into the light of comparison with other systems, it must be conceded, that this additional demonstration is more impressive, and that it fortifies the position. Certainly it is fair, if we do no injustice to others.

Having cleared the ground in the light of Constitutional organization, there remains yet a phantom—a ghost of an objection to the same point; and with many minds, I suppose, it has operated, and still operates, to frighten, not unlike a ghost. But as I have reconnoitered the apparition, and found it such, perhaps I may assist in quieting the fears of others. It is the power of a Bishop in his own diocess.

"God," says the author of the Natural History of Enthusiasm, "sends us bishops, whether we will have them, or not." Such short sayings, when they are pertinent, and address themselves to our experience and observation, are impressive. They carry conviction to the centre of the soul. And there are few invented by man more convincing than the one here quoted. Every clergyman of every denomination, who has been long in the ministry, will feel its force. By the influence of circumstances, or by the demonstration of superior talents, or by a favourable combination of both, we see Clergymen in all directions of the Christian community, attaining a commanding position and sway. Look, for example, upon the field occupied by Presbyterian and Congregational Churches—and there it is pre-eminently true. "God hath given us bishops," even where the people deny, but cannot resist their claims.

Now, which is better, to invest these men with responsible powers, to subject their influence to conventional and well advised rules, and thus force them to execute the will of the public; or to let them run at large, do their own pleasure in their self advised way, and be responsible to nobody? To circumvent their influence is impossible; God made them to have influence. Moreover, God has ordained, that the interests of human society shall have individual persons to preside over them. There must be a king, or a president, over the nation; there must be governors over provinces and smaller states; there must be mayors of cities; heads of colleges; masters in schools; fathers of families;—all departments of society require a head. And shall the Church of God alone be without them? "Oh no," it is said, "we only differ as to the number. The pastor of every Christian congregation is the head of his own commonwealth." And shall the commonwealth of pastors have no head? This is the point, and here, in my view, is one of the grand defects of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism. It is a violation of the dictates of universal experience, and the sad effects are to my mind sufficiently obvious. It is a great chasm in the natural

constitution of society. I say natural, as found suitable and best by all experience, though all structures of society are in one sense artificial.

Presbyterian and Congregational ministers must, will, and do have their leaders—self-appointed heads; heads, who do everything by the rule of their own heads. "God sends us Bishops, whether we will have them or not;" and the mischief is, when we refuse them, that they force themselves upon us under a system, which often originates in their own whims; at best, a system of their own devising, and which changes with every new comer. It produces confusion; often creates disaster; especially when these leaders innovate on faith and practice, as is most strikingly illustrated in the present state of these two great denominations. Had these self-appointed Bishops, or others of equal ability and more trustworthy, been clothed with the proper authority of bishops, duly respected in this office, held responsible for the conscientious discharge of their appropriate functions, under a system of regulations established in general convention, which they could not neglect or violate with impunity; and had they been well sustained in this office by public opinion, and by the hands of all their brethren, who, on this supposition, would have intrusted them with all these powers, it is reasonable to suppose, that all these difficulties and painful results would have been avoided.

That the Episcopal office is a thing to be feared, under such a constitution as that of the Episcopal church of the United States, is all a phantom. At any rate, if we refuse it, we must have our self-appointed bishops; and if the thing be an evil, it is wise to choose the least of the two evils, put all our bishops under wholesome regulations, and make and hold them responsible for observing them.

Look at the bishops of the Protestant Episcopal church of the United States, and see whether they are men to be feared for their power, when the character of that community, the manner in which the bishops are elected, and their amenability to constitutional law and public opinion, are considered. In the first place, no man

could stand the smallest chance of being elected to an Episcopate, who had not been long known and well proved in that character, and in all those virtues of a man and a Christian, which the present enlightened state of the Christian world first and principally demand for this office. He must not only have a character and standing among Christians, but "a good report of those who are without"—a reputation earned before and in relation to the public—implying long and fixed habits of thinking, feeling, and acting, which cannot be easily changed or disturbed—having himself passed the severest ordeals of public scrutiny, in all those forms which a candidate for this place must unavoidably draw upon him. The reputation of such a man, and for the purpose of his anticipated office, must be in the highest degree dear to himself. He might well be supposed to have a conscience nice enough to border on nervous sensitiveness.

But in addition to all these high and commanding motives—not to speak of the fear of God, which common charity should award to him in no small measure—there is the formidable array of constitutional and canon law, which binds and holds him in all forms; and the eye of the public, which is one of the eyes of God's providence, is fixed upon him from all directions, challenging his circumspection and a conscientious devotion to his official duties. Can it be imagined, that one of many, thus proved, thus chosen by so many voices, and invested with this high and responsible trust, ever feeling, or having reason to feel, that the eye of the world is upon him, will be likely often, if ever, so to abuse his power and influence as to do discredit to his station, or give any notable occasion of complaint? If he should, he is as much amenable to law and to judgment as the meanest of his clergy, and before the same tribunal; and although he might be borne long with on account of his office, yet judgment would be sure to overtake him, if not in the forms of law, certainly in the shape of public opinion. It is by no means fair to quote history from other countries, or other times, to meet a case of this kind. It is our own

time and our own country, under our own peculiar and prudent regulations, in the midst of our own state of society, where this scene is laid; and the certainty is a moral one, how in ordinary cases such a system would operate. Such generally—and I believe I may say without exception—is the confidence reposed in the Bishops of the American Episcopal church. But notwithstanding the excellence of their characters, so jealously and carefully are they watched—it is the habit of our people, and the result of our institutions—and so responsible are they held, the danger is not that they will have too much influence, but rather that they will have too little—that they will not dare to execute the duties of their office with that decision and energy which the interests of religion and the public good may require.

I shall now proceed to compare American Episcopacy-in-form with American Episcopacy that is not in form, or that is not in the usual form. And I do it for the purpose of setting Episcopacy proper in a still more clear and more advantageous light.

The Episcopal principle under its own proper form is one thing; but it should be remembered, that the principle may be adopted and applied without the form. This is constantly done, as we have just seen, by self-appointed bishops; it is assumed and acted upon to a great extent by theological seminaries; it is the vital principle of our voluntary religious and benevolent associations, national and subordinate.

Take, for example, the American Home Missionary Society. This is an appropriate Episcopal institution on a stupendous scale and of great energy, wanting only the form and name. Its diocess is the United States of America; nay, it would seem by one of the resolutions brought forward at its annual meeting in 1835, that it proposes to extend its jurisdiction over the world. But we will consider it first, as limited to the United States.

This society was organized under this name in 1826, having taken the place, and assumed the work and responsibilities of the United Domestic Missionary Society,

which was merged in this. It then had 119 congregations connected with it, and 101 ministers in its employ. From year to year this society has been extending its connexions, its operations, and its influence, and multiplying its agencies, to an extent unexampled, till in 1835 it reported "719 missionaries and agents" (all ministers, I suppose) in its employ; 484 of whom were settled pastors; and 1,050 congregations and missionary districts. The income of this society, as reported for the first year, was $20,031; as reported in 1835, it was $88,863—having gradually increased annually for nine years from the first mentioned sum to the last.

The instructions, or canons, of this society, as contained in the form of their commission for the guidance and government of the ministers in their employ, are minute, specific, and imperative. "You are required," &c., on *six* several and specific points, together with a reference to *six* other specifications in "General Instructions." In addition to these is another "Notice," embracing *ten* specifications—the whole comprehending the entire code of canons for the regulation of individuals in commission of the society.

The effect of this commission is to bring all its agents and beneficiaries into an intimate connexion with the society, and under its supervision and control. The connexion is much more intimate, and the control much more absolute and energetic, than that which results between the relation of a bishop on the one hand and the clergy and congregations of his diocess on the other, because, in the former case, it is a connexion of *dependance;* and the canons of instruction are no less minute and specific.

The secretary of the American Home Missionary Society, then—who stands in relation to these numerous clergy, and to these still more numerous congregations, as a Bishop, exercising Episcopal supervision and control in a far more absolute and energetic sense, than any Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal church of the United States—had under his care in 1835, of clergy, 719, and of congregations 1,050; while all the 17 Bishops of the

Episcopal church together, for the same ground, have only 772 clergy, and 800 to 900 congregations—averaging, if we take 800 for each class, 47 for each Bishop.

It is not my business to certify to the worthiness or usefulness of this Episcopal Missionary Institution—for it is obviously of an Episcopal character. It does not require such certificate from me; if it did, I would most cheerfully give it. "Its praise is in all the churches." It has done and is doing a great and good work. May the Head of the Church still prosper and smile upon it. My only object is to show, that for extent of influence, for power in actual possession, and energy in the execution of the Episcopal office—an energy resulting from the peculiar character of the relation—the whole college of Bishops presiding over the Episcopal church of the United States, in their united sway, fall far behind the secretary of the American Home Missionary Society.

One thing is certain, that if such power is dangerous —which is the imputation I am here called upon, or have taken upon me to encounter, and which, be it remembered, does not originate with me—then is it high time to look to this society. It has the bread of its numerous and wide-spread dependants in its hands, temporal and spiritual, and can measure out to all and to each, in its own sovereign pleasure, both the kind and the degree, and actually does so—the kind of doctrine to its beneficiaries, and the measure of bread to its agents. I do not say that this is not suitable—that it is not good, in all that has been done, and is doing. In that complacency which I have always had in this society, and in that sympathy I have always felt in its operations, I believe its influence is both good and suitable. But I am speaking to the point of power—of control—as a matter of fact, and in comparison of the influence enjoyed and used by the Bishops of the Episcopal church, severally and united.

The *dependance* of the Clergy employed by the American Home Missionary Society, and of the congregations assisted, is a most important feature, and a powerfully active principle, so far as relates to the point under con-

sideration. It places them under the absolute control of the society; and but for the virtue, which we know belongs to the presiding agencies, it would certainly be a dangerous power. The Clergy and Congregations of the American Episcopal Church are not dependant on their Bishops; but the Bishops are more dependant on them.

But it appears by the following extract from the Monthly Magazine published by this Society, that they are not contented with the narrow field of the United States:—

"It will be recollected that among the resolutions adopted at the last anniversary of the American Home Missionary Society was the following, viz:—

"'*Resolved*, That the signal blessings which have hitherto attended the operations of this Society, afford ample encouragement to our endeavours, in humble dependance on God, to *extend* its operations, until its influences shall be felt not only in the whole extent of the American continent, but also *throughout the civilized world*.'

"The bearing and tendency of this resolution require a passing remark. It is easily perceived that the *influences* of this Society, in many respects, may be felt in other countries, while its direct operations are confined to its appropriate field, which, according to its constitution, is the United States. It was not the design of the founders of this Society, however, thus to confine its operations. The constitution declares, (Art. 2,) 'The *great* object of this Society shall be to assist congregations that are unable to support the gospel ministry, and to send the gospel to the destitute within the United States.' The word *great* in this article was inserted for the express purpose of giving liberty to the Society to extend its operations to adjoining countries."

The object of the paper, from which this extract is made, was to prepare the way for complying with applications from France for assistance. It assumes, that "the field" for the society "is the world."

This, for aught I have to say, is all very well, and it is noble too, as it illustrates the spirit and enterprise of

this institution; and it is no less well for me, as it illustrates the point of comparison, which I am endeavouring to bring out. It leaves the aspirations of American Episcopacy out of sight; they are not to be named in such company. I think, however, it would have been more creditable to the Society, if this forced interpretation of the word "*great*" in the second article of its Constitution, had been spared. If they have money for France, or for any other foreign field, let them remit it; but not on any such authority, as the averred and occult meaning of this word. Evidently, it never had such a meaning.

The Board of Missions of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in its revived energy and extended operations, as a jealous rival of the last named Society, is another specimen of Episcopal care and control, precisely of the same character with the American Home—except, that it is itself supervised by the General Assembly; and the scope of its operations is nearly equal.

The American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions is an institution of the same class, but of a much higher order. In the extent of its plan, it is like the Propaganda of Rome. The purity of this society before the public stands unimpeached; and I think very justly so. Neither is that enough to say. It has positively achieved wonders. But, mark, its achievements are the results of its high Episcopal character—of its system, its single determination, its energy; and its energy has always depended, and still depends, on its Episcopal power of control.

I once had the pleasure of an acquaintance with a Moravian clergyman, who had charge of a congregation of about a dozen souls, with no prospect of increase, but rather of diminution and extinction—in the midst of a dense population, where there were many other Christian Churches of different sects, with some of which this little band might have found a comfortable home, and dispensed with the labours of their pastor, to allow him to go to a wider and more hopeful field. He was on the best terms

with all Christians, who knew him, and demonstrated the most exemplary charity towards other sects. He did not stay with his people, because he thought they could not get to heaven in any other way. Besides being most amiable and Christianlike, he was a man of a high order of talent, and of high cultivation; and his accomplished and amiable wife was a very type of himself. But on account of the poverty of their people, they were obliged to give lessons in music for a support, in which they were both distinguished proficients. I asked him one day, why he did not abandon a station of so little promise, especially as his people could still be accommodated in other churches of the town, and go to another field?

"We Moravians," said he, "submit entirely to our superiors, and regard their assignments, as the mandate of Providence. Where they send us, we go; and stay and work till they recall us, or till we die. We have no voice in our appointment; and we offer no opinion, no advice for removal. We are like an army in the tented field, under discipline—and the word of a superior is law. It would be insurrection to gainsay, to advise, to reply."

"But you are wasting your life," said I, "without result."

"No," said he, "far from it. If I by obedience accomplish nothing here, the principle pervading all our ranks, in whatever part of the world, will compensate for this loss, and more than balance it, in some other place. I am content, and shall live and die happy."

This, thought I, is instructive; and this is the secret of Moravian discipline. I do not say, that the discipline of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions is equal to this. I do not think it is. In some cases I believe they allow their missionaries to advise them, and encourage it discreetly. But they have their fixed and unalterable principles—or principles seldom and slowly changed in their present state—as well for obtaining their revenue to sustain their operations, as for the direction and control of their missionaries. Disobedience of isntructions in a missionary, or the assumption

and use of a large discretion never confided to him, would be rebellion, and ordinarily a disqualification for further employment. The history of this Institution in connexion with its servants abroad, is proof of this; and an atonement for such offence cannot easily be made. The Society get all the information they can, make the most of it, and their instructions are law. They act on the Episcopal principle to the very letter—under the most rigid system. The Episcopacy of the United States, as compared with this in its operation on the clergy, is mildness—gentleness. I do not mean, that this Board is oppressive, or unreasonable; the system is indispensable to this work. I only mean to develop the fact, and set it in the light of comparison, so far as it is pertinent to my object. It is a principle in the missionary work, that he who devotes himself to it, has no will of his own. "He pleases not himself." And it is a high—a noble character. Their reward is in heaven.

The American and the two great Presbyterian Education Societies are institutions of momentous consequence to the country for the germ of power that is lodged in them, and for their control over the "inclination of the twig." These three societies, substantially the same in principle and in discipline throughout, according to their reports for 1835, had under their care as beneficiaries, 2,230 young men, in the various stages of their Academical and Theological education, beginning at the time they are called from the plough or the workshop, and ending with their commission to preach the Gospel and administer its ordinances; and the disposal of $171,293 annually for this purpose. When it is considered, that these beneficiaries are taken up before their principles are fixed, or their characters formed, and that all this work is to be done by their patrons and benefactors; that the latter feel an interest and a commendable zeal in presiding over this work with assiduous care and untiring pains; that a thorough inquisition is made into the private conduct of the beneficiaries, and that they are required to report to the proper authority at stated periods the entire economy of their habits and

lives, pecuniary, social, moral, and religious, in each particular item, embracing a score, more or less; that pastoral, *alias* Episcopal visitations at all convenient periods are made to the seminaries where they are placed, by the principal Secretaries, or their proxies, to form a personal and intimate acquaintance, to inquire into the fidelity, to advise as to the general reading, and to secure the confidence of those under their care; and that throughout the entire course of their education their relation to the Societies is one of *dependance*, consequently of obligation, and naturally of gratitude; there can be no doubt as to the amount of influence, that is employed and realized, in the formation of the characters of these young men, and in fitting them for the duties of public life. These Societies have the moulding of their minds in their hands, and the almost entire formation of their intellectual and moral characters from beginning to end. That the facilities afforded of educating their beneficiaries radically and thoroughly, and confirming them for life, with few exceptions, in the great and distinctive principles of the sects to which they belong, and in the usual modes of accomplishing their own objects on the wide public, will be neglected, is scarcely to be supposed. And thus this immense system of educating and forming the minds of such a large body of men, and of sending them forth to educate and form the minds of the people, scattered over the face of our country, in all that concerns the moral, religious, social, and in many respects, directly and indirectly, political principles—is concentrated and lodged in the hands of a few individuals. That this power is well and prudently used, in all good conscience and honesty, according to the principles of those who wield it, I have never yet seen any reason to doubt. But that it is a power, more radical, and more influential over the destinies of our country, than is lodged in the hands of any other equal number of men, will be obvious at a single glance.

The Temperance Society, which, while it kept on its own proper basis, prospered so well and accomplished so much good, has more recently, as is well known, tres-

passed upon ground, the propriety of which is questioned by the great body of those persons, who are decidedly the advocates of what they consider its legitimate design. This society has devised an ingenious method of enforcing its *ultra* pledges—particularly on ministers and other prominent characters—by sending copies of them by mail, and publishing in their journals the names of those who comply. As it is known, that no clergyman, or other prominent religious persons, who have "a local habitation and a name," are overlooked, those who do not comply are as effectually published, as those who do; and consequently subjected to all the odium, that can be brought to bear upon them on that account. It is not long since, that a clergyman, a decided and strong temperance man, and occupying a highly important and influential post in the community, but unwilling however to comply with the *ultra* pledge, told me, with chagrin and mortification, that having received a copy of it by mail "from the Vatican at Albany," he was *forced* into it as the least of two evils, inasmuch as he would be published, if he did not comply, by *not being published.* His station and relations in the Christian community were such, that he could not get along comfortably without complying with this *order*—for such was its character and operation on himself. "This," he added, "was tyranny with a witness!" It only shows how these public associations, when they get to be strong, and when urged on by the impetuous ultraisms of our country, may usurp and employ an illegitimate power.

On the whole: I trust I need not go farther to show, that there are far more formidable powers possessed and wielded by numerous public religious and other associations in our country, than can fairly be attributed to the Episcopacy of the Episcopal church, or to its ecclesiastical organization; nay, that by inspection and scrutiny, the power of the latter, in all but a needful and wholesome influence, vanishes, while that of the others is as vigorous as needs be; and in some of them more so. Besides, the influence of the American Episcopal church is uniform, well-defined, tangible, fixed by constitutional

laws, and remains the same from the date of its existence; the public can see what it has been, what it is, and may satisfactorily know what it will continue to be; while that of many of these comparatively irresponsible institutions, is developing new and latent energies from year to year, constantly varying in their forms, and surprising the public with some hitherto undiscovered features.

It is moreover to be said in praise of the Episcopal church, that she has most scrupulously abstained from meddling with all political questions; that she has never approached them—a most important and material fact in that regard, which has been under consideration in this chapter; at the same time, that the most exciting political question, now convulsing the nation, has been carried into the Presbyterian connexion to a wide extent, been discussed warmly in churches, in Presbyteries, and Synods, and in many of them passed into the form of resolutions, so as to draw down the notice of our national legislature, and caused it to be said on the floor of the Senate—"that if the Presbyterian church should insist on agitating this question, it would divide the Union." This is the substance and point of the declaration, though not perhaps the exact words. I quote from memory.

This uniform and conscientious abstinence from politics is a most important feature, and a practically salutary element in the American Episcopal church. It is meddling with politics that has for centuries been most injurious to Christian churches—injurious and destructive to their appropriate character and spiritual influence—and greatly injurious to their reputation, and I may add, to the reputation and influence of Christianity in the world. It is not without reason, that political men and governments are jealous of large Christian organizations—as history so abundantly attests, that the influence acquired by them has been frequently abused. When, therefore, we see the Presbyterian church, as a church, taking up questions which have an intimate connexion with the structure of our political institutions, and passing resolutions upon them for the purpose of influencing

the public mind, it becomes a natural subject of anxiety, not only with Christians, who desire to see politics kept out of the church, but with politicians and statesmen, who are always jealous of such interference. It tends to keep alive and nourish that prejudice, which has so long been felt, and to give occasion for a renewal of the charge—that Christians in their organizations have political designs.

It is a remarkable feature in the changes of society, that a community sometimes gets into a new state of the combination of its constituted elements before it is, as a whole, aware of it. Such eminently is the present condition of our country, religiously considered. It turns out, that the Episcopal principle is the pervading and ruling element of our whole religious public at this moment—the announcement of which, no doubt, will take many by surprise. But a single glance at facts will show that it is indeed so. The facts adduced in this chapter prove it, not to name any more. Turn our eyes which way we will over the wide country—more especially when we look at the great anniversaries of our religious and benevolent institutions at Boston, New-York, and Philadelphia—we find the entire religious population, including every denomination of importance, associated and organized into systematic bodies, supervised and controlled by a few individuals, and all based on the Episcopal principle—and that in most cases in the most absolute and energetic form. There is now no escape from it—no treading back. If Episcopacy is an evil, considered as a theory for practical use, we have left us only the *choice* of evils—to adopt its simple and proper form, as in the Protestant Episcopal church of the United States, which is definite, palpable, and responsible ; or go on under the supervision and control of these extemporaneous institutions, which have grown up, as it were, in a night—which are the creatures of accident—which have been constantly shifting in their forms with circumstances—which are still liable to changes every year, and will doubtless experience them—the end of

which no human foresight can predict—but which will be sure always to carry in them the element of power, naturally tending to the augmentation of its energies with the progress of time.

I have shown in the light of comparison, that American Episcopacy—or that church polity and government, which generally passes under this name—is the simplest, purest, and most equal of all; that, when subjected to analysis and the most rigid scrutiny, it cannot be found fault with, as withholding the balance of power from the people; but that its constitutional structure, as is the fact with our political institutions, and in accommodation to the republican principles of this land, confers upon the people an influential and actual control. It has been seen, that the constitution of the Episcopal church is even more popular in this particular than the Presbyterian, inasmuch as the laity are not only admitted into the highest legislative place on a footing of equality with the Bishops and Presbyters, for the decision of all questions—but on one contingency they may array themselves in a separate rank, to determine votes by a pure laical influence by a majority of their own—a most extraordinary, and for the people, a most generous concession. It shows in the first place, that the Bishops and clergy never wished to have an undue influence; and in the next, that they never can have.

It is manifest, that there is no religious association in this country so pure and popular as this, where there are official grades, one above another; and the history of the American Episcopal church proves, that it operates harmoniously. In other portions of our religious world, the elements of collision are extensively and powerfully at work, striving, each man for himself and each society for itself, for an Episcopal sway, but rejecting its proper form—which notable fact, and the manner thereof, afford a most reasonable ground of presumption, that the real occasion of these collisions is the want of Episcopacy in form.

Consider, for example, the unhappy relations of the American Home Missionary Society and the Board of

Missions of the Presbyterian church—both Episcopal institutions in principle, and that of the highest order. Throughout the wide territories of the Presbyterian church these societies cover the same and the whole ground; are of the same nature and have the same object; they come into collision everywhere, dividing churches, Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and the General Assembly. All these unhappy results would be entirely avoided under the proper forms of an Episcopacy. And so generally we may say of the known collisions of the Presbyterian church, in other forms and on other topics, practical, doctrinal, and disciplinary.

It cannot for a moment be doubted, that it is better to have religious organizations, well defined, fixed, and known—and so compact and comprehensive in their forms, as not to be easily shaken or disturbed, by ambitious aspirants, or contentious persons—than for a door to be left open for perpetual innovations, or for the community to be flooded from time to time with new schemes and new societies to take the place of others, or to come into collision with them, to the disturbance of the public peace. The religious history of our country for the last twenty years is a most impressive illustration of the correctness of this remark.

But, then, although it does indeed appear by this showing, that American Episcopacy is not so bad as we thought it was; although it must be confessed, that its constitutional and fundamental principles, as expressed and declared, are suitable, fair, and safe for the people; yet its very genius is the spirit of dómination; it has the mark of the beast upon its forehead; we cannot forget what it has done at Rome—what it has done and is doing in Great Britain.

Alas for the name of a thing, if it has ever been bad! There is no getting over a name. What has American Episcopacy to do with Rome, or Rome with it? What with Great Britain, or Great Britain with it? Christianity was at Rome, therefore Christianity is good for nothing; it is bad. Christianity is in the church of

England, therefore Christianity is to be feared! Certainly the last conclusion comes as legitimately as the first.

But, admitting that Episcopacy *is* bad; that its genius *is* the spirit of domination; we have seen that the principle is in operation throughout the land in numerous forms, in all the great religious organizations and associations; and independently of them; and that Episcopacy in its own proper form is the least objectionable of all, first, because it is open, fair, and fixed; and next, because it actually operates well. Who shall give a bad name to that which is good—good in appearance—good in fact? If these other and surreptitious forms of Episcopacy, which have imbodied the principle, under covert forms, indeed, but forms most potent—if these are safe—how much more safe is Episcopacy in its proper form? On the very principles of those, who object to Episcopacy, but who yet run into it in practice, they ought themselves to be Episcopalians, if they would be consistent—certainly, if they would be fair. It is due to themselves; it is due to the public; and in my opinion it would be more safe for the public, and only in that way safe; for then the public could know what to depend upon; whereas now they cannot know.

To object to Episcopacy for what it may possibly be, when no other possible objection can be found, is indeed the weakest objection possible. If brought against these covert forms, there might possibly, nay with truth, be some force in it. These, possibly, may not in the end turn out well. There must be high endowments of wisdom and of virtue to save them from being carried into an uncomfortable stretch of power; and more virtue and more wisdom, than ordinarily fall to the lot of man, to *redeem* them, when once they shall have got there.

Moreover, when given individuals have been long time candidates for the Episcopal office—have fairly earned their way to it—and at last been regularly chosen and publicly invested with its trust and appropriate prerogatives, under Constitutional and Canon law, being burdened with its distinct and well defined responsibilities,

as well as clothed with its powers—there is no surprise in the public mind—there can be none. They have come into their place by universal consent, themselves appointed to be governed, as well as to govern, by a well defined code of regulations. But in the other case, when men have made their way into a higher and more absolute power of the same kind, though under another name, and stand in it independent of a like salutary control, the public will sooner or later be surprised, and become anxious. And the consequence will be a struggle—on the one hand to maintain, and on the other to reduce an influence, which, it will be averred, was not fairly acquired, and is dangerous to be held without a more tangible responsibility and control. Thus society is liable to convulsion and disaster.

Lest it should not only be conceded, that the argument of this chapter is good and sufficient for its purpose, but felt also by some minds, that it proves too much, viz. that no Episcopacy whatever is safe; or lest there should be left a conviction tending to that conclusion, it may be proper for me to remark, that, although there may be a leaven of feeling in the community, disposed to cherish a repugnance to all sorts and degrees of religious organization, I do not think it is sufficient to prevent them. The economy of combination and organization is the spirit of the times—in matters of business and in social arrangements. A pure democracy is known and confessed to be an impracticable theory. That is, every member of the community cannot be the President, or the Governor, or the Justice, or the Juror; neither can the whole body of the people get together for the transaction of every item of public business, as they would then have time to do nothing else, and the ends of society would be frustrated. It is impossible to come nearer to democracy, than Republicanism, the principle of which is—that the people shall have a voice in the election of their rulers, and an immediate or mediate control over the appointment of all public servants. And such we have seen is the organization of the American Episco-

pal Church—purely republican. This is easily seen, and may be made evident and satisfactory to all. And if this is the genius of our institutions and the spirit of the country, it harmonizes perfectly with the age, the will of the people, and the character of their civil government. Order in religion, since the people must have a religion, and since it is of all things most desirable and most important, is as necessary as in civil society; and hence it is impossible to dispense with a religious, or spiritual polity. And a polity, that harmonizes with the spirit of the people and the genius of their government, cannot fail to be satisfactory. Whatever else they may be dissatisfied with, they cannot complain of this; whatever else they may fall back from, they must have a basis somewhere, and they can hardly fall back farther than their own will, as usually expressed. It has ever been found, and doubtless will always prove so, that it is as impossible to accomplish the great objects of religion without a social organization, as it is to attain the objects of a civil government without it. The latter would be a contradiction in terms; but there is nothing in which public sympathy operates so powerfully as in religion; and the more powerful the religious propensity may be in its social character, the more does it require a salutary direction and control. Religion without government runs into fanaticism—into chaos—in the same manner, as the ordinary state of society would be dissolved into anarchy without civil order. For myself, I have no concern, that the effect of my argument, if it should prevail, would be to react upon the Episcopal system, where it exists in its proper form, to dissolve and bring it to the ground. The more severely this system is subjected to scrutiny, the brighter will it shine, and the more will it commend itself to the respect and estimation of the public.

CHAPTER III.

Consideration of objections to the Liturgy, and to other forms and modes of Episcopal worship.

The forms and modes of public worship in the Episcopal Church are no part of Episcopacy in itself considered, as a polity and government. They are properly accidents in such a relation. That is, there is nothing in Episcopacy, that necessarily demands them.

Although the Liturgy of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States is in all fairness to be judged by its simple merits, yet in entering on this subject it will probably be deemed pertinent, so far as we have space, and may also be gratifying to the curious, as well as useful to the inquiring, to introduce this chapter by a brief retrospective and historical view of the Liturgies of the Hebrew and Christian Churches—and more especially of the Liturgy, the consideration of which is more particularly before us.

It is a remarkable fact, that the first occasion of public worship, to which the children of Israel were summoned after they had crossed the Red Sea, was celebrated by singing or chanting a piece of Liturgical composition, in which all the people joined in alternate ranks, or choirs: "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying—I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously," &c. Ex. xv. 1—19. That this is one of the sublimest and most beautiful specimens of devotional composition, ever written, I need not say. It was suited to the occasion, itself most sublime, awful, triumphant. When the more public worship of the assembled people was over, "Miriam and all the women" took up the same anthem "with timbrels and in dances."

The writings of Moses generally were made a public ritual; and it will be observed, that they are frequently interspersed with a specific and imperative injunction, that they should be read to all the people. Occasionally we have prescribed forms for the different parts of public service, of the nature of daily and other occasional consecrations of the people, sacred vessels, &c.; responses, benedictions, with a multitude of other offices; of which the following are a few specimens: For the expiation of uncertain murder, it is ordered, first, that the priests and sons of Levi should be in attendance; next, that "the elders of the city, nearest unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over a heifer," beheaded in the place of murder; and they, the elders, representatives of the people, "shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people Israel's charge." This was a prescribed ceremony and form for such a case. Deut. xxi. 5–8. "In this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them: The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Num. vi. 23–26. "And it came to pass, when the Ark set forward, that Moses said (was accustomed to say,) Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." Num. x. 35–36. The 26th chapter of Deuteronomy is an interesting specimen of a prescribed Liturgical service, ceremonial, responsive, declarative of covenant engagements, &c. And numerous other portions of the writings of Moses are composed into prescript forms, adapted to occasions, and allotted to persons, people, and priests, according to the parts respectively assigned to each. David appointed the Levites "to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at even." 1 Chron. xxiii. 30. Which is evidently a morning and evening public service—or

prayers. The Temple service ordered and established by Solomon was minute and circumstantial in its prescribed Liturgical assignments; and also as restored by Nehemiah after the captivity, which he says, was all done "according to the commandment of David and Solomon his son." Neh. xii. The Psalms, as seems to be universally conceded, are nearly all Liturgical, variously assigned to the priests, people, and choir. In short, it may be said, that the Hebrew ritual, in process of time, grew up into a comprehensive system for common and for all special occasions, specifically and minutely divided into separate parts for all and for each. And what is specially worthy of notice is, that there was Divine authority for it, if we are to respect the ordinances of Moses, as worthy to claim this high character. The same may be said of the Psalms, and the order of public worship, which these inspired compositions prescribed. So also of many other parts of the Old Testament, which were evidently designed for Liturgical use. Frequently we find such notices as the following: "Then on that day David delivered forth this Psalm to thank the Lord into the hand of Asaph and his brethren —Give thanks, &c." 1 Chron. xvi. 7. See also Ps. cv. "Moreover Hezekiah, the king, and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord *with the words of David and Asaph the seer*," &c. 2. Chron. xxix. 30. "So the service of the house of the Lord *was set in order*." Ib. 35. "They set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord *after the ordinances of David*. And they sang together *by course*," &c. Ezra iii. 10–11. "And Moses wrote this law, (meaning his writings comprehensively) and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, and unto all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, &c. . . . . Thou shalt read this law before all Israel, in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, women, and children, and the stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, that they may learn, and fear the Lord your

God, and observe to do all the words of this law." Deut. xxxi. 9–12.

It is evident, therefore, that the Hebrews, and afterward the Jews—the latter being the name of the remnant, after the ten tribes disappeared—had a Liturgy on a most extensive scale, and that in the sense of prescribed forms of public worship. Every part of this service seems to have been prescribed, and the manner thereof.

When our Saviour appeared, he found the Jews in the possession and use of a public ritual. I think I am warranted to assume, that this point will not be disputed. It is abundantly proved by the concurrent authorities of Josephus, Scaliger, Buxtorf, Selden and others. Hammond and Lightfoot, of later time, have clearly shown, not only, that the Jewish Liturgy prescribed the forms of prayer and praise, but they have been able to determine the *order* and *method* of their hymns and supplications. It is evident that our Saviour conformed to that ritual, including all established orders of public worship, inasmuch as no notice occurs of a complaint brought against him for departing from it, or in any way treating it with disrespect. This would have been a material and grave charge, and would have been seized upon with avidity and determination, if any overt acts or neglect of his had laid him open. It would have occasioned such a clamour, and led to such results, as could not have been passed over by such fidelity of history, as is known and believed to have characterized the Evangelists. This total silence, therefore, is tantamount to a positive statement of the fact, so necessarily involved.

Hence we account most satisfactorily—and so far as I can see in no other possible way—for the exceeding and scrupulous paucity of any new and peculiar religious services introduced by our Saviour. He lived under the Jewish dispensation, and conformed to it. All agree in this last position. And that conformity must have included a submission to the forms and orders of public worship.

The prayers of "the hypocrites," "standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets," which our

Saviour rebukes, Math. vi. 5. evidently refer, not to acts of public worship, as usually kept up under authoritative regulations, but to private devotions, such as are now practised in Catholic countries and churches, and by the Turks, for ostentation. The directions immediately given, in the 6th verse, determine this point: "But thou, when *thou* prayest, enter into thy *closet*," &c.

It is a notable fact, that our Saviour published and established no other form of prayer, except the short and comprehensive one, commonly called the Lord's Prayer. So scrupulous was he not to innovate on the established forms of worship, (I think it is fair to reason in this way, and that no other way can account for the fact) that when the disciples, by the mouth of one of their number, made the distinct request, "Lord teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples," he still went no further, than to give them again "the Lord's Prayer" abridged, except only some instructions by way of commentary on the spirit of prayer. John, it would seem, had given *his* disciples some *new* forms; but our Saviour declined. Christ was accustomed to pray, and to pray with his disciples. It was immediately after he had concluded prayers "in a certain place," that this request was made, which proves, that it was not only a *form*, but some *new* form, which they asked for; and I think it moreover proves, that our Saviour himself had at this time been using a common form. If the prayer was new and extemporaneous, then the very thing asked for was before them, viz. a pattern. I think soberly, that this will not be regarded as a forced conclusion. It is natural, probable, and the only consistent interpretation. I do not deny, it is reasonable to believe, that our Saviour was accustomed to offer up prayers appropriate to himself, to his relation to his Father, to his disciples, to the world; and of course entirely out of the range of a common ritual. Such for example is his prayer in the 17th of John; during his agony in Gethsemane; and on the Cross. But it is a most remarkable fact, that he published and prescribed no forms for common use, except the Lord's Prayer; and I know not how to account

for it, unless by admitting, that he did not think proper to disturb or innovate upon the established Jewish Liturgy. The only other items of a proper Liturgical service which he gave, in addition to the Lord's Prayer, were for the observance and administration of the Sacramental ordinances—the Supper and Baptism. These, as is obvious, were essentially necessary, inasmuch as they are the only seals and symbols in Christ's visible kingdom, appointed for use to the end of the world. The publication of them was reserved—of the one, till he was about to suffer, and of the other, till the time of his Ascension.

"When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; ..... he will show you things to come." According to directions given, the Apostles waited at Jerusalem for "the promise of the Father"—for the Spirit. It was left with them, under such a guide, to open the Christian dispensation, and to establish its ordinances. And now let us see what course they pursued in relation to the Jewish ritual, and in establishing new forms of worship.

First, they did not immediately and thoroughly abandon the temple worship, but were found habitually in attendance upon it: "Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour"—or evening prayer. Acts iii. 1. At Antioch in Pisidia "Paul and his company went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets"—after the customary Liturgical service was over—"the rulers of the Synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." Acts xiii. 14–15. I cannot see, that the use, which Paul made of this occasion, is any detriment to my argument. The narrative shows, first, that the Apostles were accustomed to attend on the Jewish service; next, that their appearance in this instance impressed the rulers of the Synagogue, not only, that they were regular worshippers, but so exemplary in their conformity, as to inspire the confidence, though strangers,

that they might deliver an acceptable exhortation. At Thessalonica, "where was a Synagogue of the Jews, Paul, *as his manner* (custom) *was*, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." It is morally certain, that he could not have purchased these repeated protracted hearings, unless he had conformed strictly to their ritual. "To the Jews I became a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law," &c. 1 Cor. ix. 20. For a long time the Apostles practised circumcision, and generally conformed to Jewish rites and ceremonies, over and above the public Liturgical services—as in the case of Paul's "shaving his head at Cenchrea, because he had a vow." Acts xviii. 18. Peter held out so long in conformity to Jewish customs, that, on one occasion, Paul had to rebuke him for "dissimulation;" "for he was to be blamed." It is evident, therefore, that the Apostles did not immediately, nor for a long time, abandon the temple worship at Jerusalem, nor that of the Synagogue in other places.

But did they set up a Christian ritual? Yes, as soon and as fast as was convenient. It was not possible to do much in that way immediately. It had taken ages and centuries to form the Jewish ritual, and to bring it into use; nor is it easy to see, that there were any facilities much more advantageous for establishing a full and complete ritual for the Christian Church, in any brief period, if we consider the state of the world, and the materials, out of which the church was to be formed—having Judaism on the one hand to subdue and transform, and paganism on the other, to reclaim from its idolatry and multitudinous vices.

The first form of prayer given us in Acts iv. 24–30, is partly composed from the Jewish Liturgy, as will be seen; and what is more, "they lifted up their voice to God *with one accord*." Even though it be claimed as an extemporaneous prayer, it was evidently supported in a proper Liturgical manner, according to custom. It is fairly to be inferred from the Epistles of the Apostles,

that they began to introduce Liturgical services. The rebuke of Paul to the Corinthians, "every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine," &c. has its force only in this assumption, that they did not observe the forms and rules, that had been *prescribed* by him, harmoniously. The "Amen" prescribed to "the unlearned" proves the custom of responses. Even "the prophets," or persons favoured with revelations, the Apostle required to be subject to prescribed rules, in the use of their gifts, that "all things might be done to edification." He enjoined silence, except on this condition. The joint worship "in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" enjoined on the Ephesians and Colossians is to this point. They were to "teach and admonish" by these, evidently implying some other conjunct services, not indicated clearly and alone by these terms.

Liturgies have been ascribed to the Apostles, Peter and James, and to the Evangelist Mark. St. James's Liturgy was composed for the Church at Jerusalem, of which he had the charge; and the existence of which, as genuine, seems to be demonstrated by the fact, that Cyril, one of his successors over the Church of Jerusalem, wrote a commentary upon it. Certain it is, that there were Liturgies in existence from the earliest times of the Church, denominated "Common prayers" by Justin Martyr, of the former part of the 2d Century; "constituted prayers," by Origen, of the first part of the 3d Century; and "solemn prayers," "preces solennes," a round of prayers, or prayers perennial, by Cyprian, middle of the 3d Century. The Emperor Constantine had prayers composed for his army, and used in his Court "authorized prayers," according to Eusebius. Basil and Chrysostom, of the 4th Century, composed Liturgies. The Council of Laodicea in the year 367 ordered, "that the same Liturgy, or form of prayer, should be always used, both at the ninth hour, and in the evening." The same rule was adopted by the fourth general Council of Chalcedon in the year 451. The Council of Mela, in the former part of the 5th Century, enjoined, "that such prayers should be used by all, as

were approved of in the Council, and that none should be said in the Church, but such as had been approved of by the more prudent sort of persons in a Synod."

From the fourth and fifth Centuries onward, down to the Reformation of the sixteenth Century, it is universally admitted, that Liturgies, full and complete, were in common use all over the Christian world, prescribed by the Ecclesiastical authorities of the different times, undergoing occasional alterations and additions.

It is evident, therefore, that the Christian Church came into the use of an established and complete ritual of worship, as soon as was convenient; that the Jews have always had a public ritual, and still continue to have it; and that remote branches of the Christian Church, such as the Syrian, discovered by Dr. Buchanan, and the Abyssinian, as travellers affirm, have kept their rituals from the earliest ages.

The Liturgy of the Church of England was finally compiled and authorized under Edward VI. in 1548, since which there has been but little alteration. The Commission appointed for that purpose was composed of 7 Bishops, Cranmer and Ridley, Martyrs of Queen Mary's reign, having been two of them; and of six other high dignitaries of the Church—in all 13. Some slight expurgations and amendments have since been made in the times of Elizabeth, James I., and Charles II.; but none of material importance since 1661.

It is well known, that the Roman Church went into great excess in multiplying occasions and objects of worship, public and private, and in devising and adapting forms to each and all. They ran into idolatry, and burdened the public conscience with innumerable superstitions. It is equally well known, that the Reformed Protestant Churches rejected, each for itself, what of the occasions and objects of worship they considered idolatrous, and what of the forms specifically appertained to them. They rejected also more or less of form, that was in itself indifferent to conscience—that is, forms that might or might not be used, without offence to conscience

—according to the discretion and taste of those, who took the lead in these new organizations, and as they judged might minister most to edification and to the advancement of the interests of pure religion. Some went to an extreme, and laid aside nearly all form; others retained a little more; others still more; but the Church of England, after expunging those parts obnoxious to Protestant principles, availed herself of all those helps, which she considered were properly and well provided for public devotion and private worship, and which recognised, professed, and guarded the fundamental, and comprehensively, the essential doctrines of Christianity.

The Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States is the daughter of the Church of England, and has retained her Liturgy and forms substantially, having rejected and expunged a few parts, and adapted others to the peculiarities of our country and its institutions. It may be remarked, that some of the things rejected and expunged by the American branch, have been disapproved by numerous intelligent and serious minds in the Church of England, who have wished and who still hope to see the time, when these defects and blemishes shall be blotted from their own public and authorized ritual.

That there are features and parts in the ritual of the American Episcopal Church, liable to objection and to criticism with those, who reject nearly all forms and prescripts of the kind, is very easy to suppose. That some criticisms may be plausibly sustained, on the simple merits of the subjects, I do not deny. I have felt and made them myself, and still feel their force. But, if I am satisfied with them, as a whole; if my conscience and taste are not offended; if I can see reasons for believing, that they are good and suitable for their purpose; that they comprehend a correct statement of the doctrines of Christianity; that they are so admirably constructed, as to bring before the religious public of every Congregation in the course of each year the substance of Bible history, precept, piety, doctrine, and prophecy, together with profitable allusions to the most eminent saints of all ages, challenging a sympathy with all those, who have

feared God from the beginning of the world;—if I find Jesus Christ in his history, in his work, in his life and doctrine, in his death and resurrection, and in all his offices, prominent and supreme, interwoven throughout, and everywhere exhibited in the services of every day and of every occasion, in some forms and features of his adorable character and appropriate offices;—these and such like reasons, which might be greatly extended, even beyond these specifications, ought, as I think must be conceded by all considerate minds, to command my respect and high estimation of a work, which has been the product of the combined wisdom, of the experience, and of the piety of so many ages of the Church of God, from the Apostles downward, comprehending a period of fifteen centuries.

No matter what has been the history of this book—I had almost said, no matter where it came from—if I judge it by its merits, it is to say the least an admirable production. It is a production, which commends itself to every Christian's mind and feelings, the prejudices of his education out of the way. It is a production, which by becoming familiar with it, disarms prejudice, enlightens the mind, and wins the affections, if there be anything of religion there. It is a remarkable fact, that no religious and conscientious persons, however strong may have been their prejudices against the Episcopal forms of worship, have attended long upon them, without becoming pleased, attached, partial to them; and few, who have been brought up in that way—I have never known one—have forsaken it for other modes of worship, except as providentially they have been drawn off by strong family ties, or other social connexions, or have been placed entirely beyond the reach of opportunities to enjoy their preferences. It satisfies the Christian, and answers all his spiritual purposes, in connexion with the Bible, on which it is based, to which it constantly refers, and nearly the whole of which it comprehends by allusion, or actual use. It offends not the taste of superior and the most cultivated minds, at the same time that it is adapted to the comprehension of the lowest and

most uncultivated. It is for the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the ignorant and the learned. It is competent to enlighten all, to edify all, and guide all in the way to heaven. I know not, that there is anything in it detrimental to truth, or piety; but am disposed to regard all its tendencies as favourable to both. I have satisfied myself, that the prescribed ritual and Canons of the Episcopal Church of the United States afford full scope for the most ardent piety and for enlightened zeal, equally and alike in private Christians and Ministers; and that, conforming to them and living up to them will qualify any and all persons for the greatest possible usefulness, as Christians, in the present state of society and of the world. That they cannot be improved, I do not say. But the many ages and centuries, which have been required for this production, may serve to show, first, that it is worthy of some respect on that account; and next, that if at this moment it were wanting, it could not be easily produced again. And all experience proves, that attempts for improvement in such a ritual, to be prudent and safe, must be slow and well advised. Doubtless there will be improvements, I know not when, nor do I at present deem myself qualified to prescribe in what particular parts and forms improvement is most desirable. On this point I have little, or no anxiety, being satisfied, that it is the best Christian ritual in existence; that it is equal to present demands; and that the proper authorities, at a suitable time, will in their wisdom and best discretion do all of this kind, that may be needed, and which future developments of Providence may suggest.

But, it seems necessary, in answering the purposes of this discussion, that I should return to a radical point, viz. Is any prescribed form of worship suitable and best? That there must be a *form*, when worship is social and in any degree public, need not be said. I mean of course, when such worship is conducted by one person, or by official characters in their place; and when it is addressed to the ear. Though the language be entirely extemporaneous, it is still a *form*. Even with those who refuse

a prescribed form of language, there is always, at least with few exceptions, a prescribed form of *order*. It is determined by custom, if by no other authority, how many psalms and hymns, how many sermons or addresses there shall be; and in what order, or relation to each other, they shall come in. So much is *prescribed* by general agreement, with few exceptions. With the Quakers, (Friends) I am aware it is not so, because they profess to be "moved by the Spirit," which is not uniform, whatever that spirit may be. If we were to concede this claim, we should of course give up all prescribed form. But in this particular the Quakers are alone, and my argument is not with them, but with those, who do actually adopt a prescribed form in a degree; so that the question is one of measure, and not of principle.

It will be found upon investigation, that prescribed form is carried further, by those who profess to reject it altogether, than merely to determine the *order* of the exercises. Reading of the Scriptures, and the psalms and hymns are obviously prescribed by custom. With few exceptions and with little variation the public prayers, if not prescribed, are *set* forms—commonplace thoughts and phrases, appropriated to that office. Most ministers, who are supposed to pray extemporaneously, run through an accustomed, and to their hearers, a well recognised round of thought, from which they seldom depart, week after week, and year after year. Some of them cannot vary from their set phrases. I knew a clergyman, who, when it was proposed to offer a special prayer, in consequence of the place in which they were assembled being struck by lightning, and two persons killed, went through his usual *form* without even alluding to the mournful occasion!

It may be true, that ministers highly gifted in extemporaneous speech, may appear to be less confined to specific forms; but if their prayers are rich and various, a peep into their drawers will ordinarily discover, that this gift is an *acquisition*, not an endowment; and that this rich variety is the result of untiring pains to commit to writing and to memory, in the same manner as the

best extemporaneous preachers—called extemporaneous —produce their sermons. Their prayers are forms *out of sight;* but they are no less forms. However, these are manifestly exceptions to the general rule. Ministers, as a body, cannot endure that amount of application to study, which is indispensable to this rich variety in prayers and in sermons. If prayers are studied, sermons will be neglected; or if supreme attention is given to sermons, the prayers will not only be formal, but meager. Doubtless, in nine parts of ten, both in number and quantity, these extemporaneous prayers, so called, are mere forms; and this assertion will easily be believed, because everybody recognises the fact. The forms most common, stale, low—having all the vices of form, without the purity of a prescribed and authorized ritual—are stereotyped in the public mind—in the mind of the leader and of those who are led.

Turn which way we will, therefore, we are doomed to form—and a *set* form. Shall I say—blessed with it? And the only question is—whether we shall have a good or a bad one; whether it shall be well provided, uniform, and authorized; or whether, for the sake of now and then a rich treat, served out to a very few, the public generally shall be obliged to listen either to commonplace, crude, undigested forms, recognised by everybody from their earliest years; or to bold and startling novelties; and both, perhaps, for a great portion, offensive to good taste in the choice of language? Yes, in many cases, absolutely vulgar, tending to excite a very uncomfortable state of feeling, instead of promoting edification —becoming a mere matter of endurance on account of vices of this description. From form we cannot escape; that is settled by universal experience. The Presbyterian, the Congregationalist, the Methodist, the Baptist —all have their forms—their set forms: the Scriptures, if read, are a form; the hymns are a form; and as it turns out, the *prayers* are a form. It is form from beginning to end—in the order and in the matter—except, perhaps, as recently and to a wide extent bold attempts have been made to break down all order and all form by

the habitual introduction and rapid succession of startling and shocking novelties. These unprecedented innovations, instead of showing how good it is to be without form and without order, are fast bringing the minds of the public to their senses, and convincing them, if they were never convinced before, that some prescribed order and form are indispensable, not only to protect us from such innovations, but for comfort and edification. The extravagance and wildness of fanaticism have overrun the country; and the danger is, that the reaction, which is the unavoidable result of such a morbid excitement, will be a settling down of some into indifference towards religion; of others, into disrespect and disgust; and of many, into infidelity. Happy, indeed, if the net of the Episcopal church should catch and save them; and to some extent no doubt it will. All these events will contribute providentially more than anything else (thanks to God, who can bring good out of evil) to show the value of such a church—to illustrate its purity, the correctness of its doctrine, the stability secured by the happy combination of its elementary principles; and above all, the benefit, the importance, the indispensableness of its forms and modes of worship in comparison with others.

These unhappy occurrences will open the eyes of the people—of those who are not already borne away on the torrent and lost in the abyss. They will see that they have been deceived, innocently, perhaps, but yet deceived. For twenty years I myself have been deceived—willingly, I confess, under the influence of education, habit, and my religious connexions; and it was these very events, in connexion with the opposite extreme of *compelling* religious belief—the one throwing order into confusion, and the other generating bitter and endless strife—which opened my eyes, and brought me to a pause. I turned, and looked, and asked, where is a remedy for these evils? To oppose the wild career of extravagance on the one hand, was useless; and all the attempts to allay the bitterness and asperity of strife on the other, had proved before the world only the putting of oil upon fire. Happy for me, there was

—happy for the community, there is—a medium between these extremes. Providence has brought in a remedy—not an extemporaneous one, but one of long standing and thorough proof; not an experiment, but a system, which has been the protection of the church through ages of conflict and seas of trouble; which has redeemed her, when plunged into idolatry and overwhelmed with superstition; which has rescued her from secular hands and secular control, when kings and civil magistrates have taken and employed her institutions and her priesthood for political ends; and which appears at last in the Episcopal church of the United States, untramelled by political bands, conscientiously eschewing all such connexion, aloof from the *odium theologicum* on the one hand, and from the raging fires of fanaticism on the other—pursuing a straightforward, dignified, independent, harmonious career, respecting herself and commanding the respect of the world.

And not only will it be seen, that we have been deceived, but injured by having been defrauded of the greater good. To escape from set forms and modes of worship is impossible, except upon the Quaker principle. Everywhere else they prevail; and even there, as the necessities of our nature and as the secret history of their doings, occasionally betrayed, abundantly show, they are not able to go on entirely "by the Spirit." They have their *appointed* or authorized speakers, who pursue their *accustomed* round; and unless they are severe students, the circle in which they move will be a small one, and sufficiently obvious to those, who habitually attend upon their ministry. If, therefore, set forms of public worship are an evil, we have before us, as was observed in regard to Episcopacy in the former chapter on the same supposition, only the *choice* of evils: shall these forms be left afloat and loose in the public mind, to be appropriated in such manner and quantity as may suit the feelings and discretion of the officiating minister for the time being, the congregation relying solely upon the ear for what he may please to dispense to them; or shall they be reduced to *written* and *prescribed* forms, that all

may have them in hand, all see, and all be prepared to join in them, if they please, because they know what is coming? Shall they be carefully and prudently provided, under the wisdom, piety, and best discretion of constituted authorities, and collected from such sources as the purest and best devotional writings and manuals, produced by Apostles, saints, and Martyrs, from the day of Pentecost to this time; or shall we be doomed to the far more defective, the much more exceptionable, and the sometimes crude, offensive, startling, and shocking forms, entailed upon us by loose, unauthorized customs, and doled out in such measure and parts, as may be convenient to the memory, or as may suit the feelings and taste of the minister for the time being?

Let us consider separately some of the most common objections to a prescribed form, such as is used in the Episcopal church.

1. It is a Roman liturgy. This reason may have force in company with prejudice; not, I think, anywhere else. It has been already fully answered in the previous chapter on Episcopacy, by the suggestion, that the objection bears with equal sway against the Bible—against Christianity, &c. If the liturgy, as abridged and expurgated from Roman corruptions, is sound in doctrine and good for practical purposes, that is enough—that is all that needs to be claimed for it. No matter where it came from. Besides, though it may have come down through that medium, it is not of course the worse, or less worthy of our respect, in all that is acknowledged and subscribed to by Protestant American Episcopalians. Some of the purest, most exemplary, and most talented Christian ministers that the world has ever seen, the Apostles excepted, have belonged to the Romish communion in their purer days; and even since that church began to be corrupted. That there are good men and Christians among the members of the Roman church, in the ranks of the clergy, as well as of the laity, even at this day, no charitable person could reasonably doubt. I have heard an American clergyman, who has been at Rome, say, that one of the present college of Cardinals

is considered by all Protestants, who visit that city, as a man who, for the purity of his character, his Christian zeal, and for his abundant labours, is worthy of the highest respect. He has preached the Gospel in every village and hamlet of Italy, and is especially noted for his evangelical labours among the poor. For us to say, If he is a good man, he would have proved it by renouncing popery, is a position, which we cannot charitably maintain. He stands in his own light, and we in ours; we are not authorized to judge him, neither is he competent to judge us. Every Christian's conscience is influenced by the history of his life. "To his own Master he standeth or falleth."

Moreover, our liturgy is not in fact a production of the church of Rome; but in all that is of original and uninspired composition, in its collects, and in the general and substantial structure thereof, it may fairly be accepted, partly by presumption from a consideration of its intrinsic and obvious merits, where positive testimony of the origin of particular parts is wanting, and partly by historical evidence, as having emanated from the hands of the most eminent Christians of all ages, back to the Apostles; and is actually connected with them. All the devotional parts of the liturgy will satisfactorily demonstrate this, even though we lay aside the consideration of the notable fact, that no devotional compositions of our own day ever obtain a general acceptance, except they are from the hand of the most pious, godly, heavenly-minded men. There is nothing in the history of the church of Rome to show, positively or presumptively, that her ritual, in any of the parts received by Protestants, had been corrupted. Besides the general excellence of the liturgical compositions, as approved by the conscience, and by the most devout and heavenly affections of the universal church, every true Christian must feel, that the service called the Litany is a very ecstasy of devotion, and that none can attain to the purity and height of its holy and heavenly breathings, without feeling that he is above the world and near to heaven. All persons accustomed to the liturgy must have felt the

power of that part of it. To such, the Litany will need no commendation from me. The like was never written by the hand of uninspired man. It seems inspired—and inspired in the highest degree. I verily believe it is so; not indeed as claiming our respect as a part of the sacred canon—but as having been drawn by the hands of men, who stood and felt themselves to be standing in and breathing the holiest atmosphere that is possible on earth —in the presence and at the footstool of the Eternal Three in One—at the foot of the Cross—sympathizing with God and with the dependance and wants of our race—breathing out the holiest, most importunate prayer after God and for redemption from sin. It seems as if they stood at the last stage between earth and heaven, about to enter heaven, but unwilling to go there, till they had used their last opportunity of prayer, and poured out before the throne of God and the Cross of a dying Saviour their effectual intercessions for all whom they were leaving behind. Let any Christian read that portion of the Liturgy, and he will confess, that this which I have said of it is not praise, but a simple statement of its merits.

In short, it is evident, that this manual of public and private devotion, in all that is uninspired, and in its general plan and structure, is the joint product of the most orthodox and the holiest of men. Say, that it has been in use in the Roman Church; say, even—though that does not appear—that it was principally produced in that Church; I see not, I feel not, that it can be the worse for that. Nay, as we are certified, that some of the most eminent Christians that have lived since the days of the Apostles have been found in that connexion, and as we have satisfactory evidence, that such characters, running back through all ages of the church, must have had the charge of this production, it comes to us under the highest sanctions of uninspired authority. It is in fact a joint work of the wisest and best men, that have been found scattered along through the entire range of the Christian Era to the sixteenth century. But the work, after all, speaks for itself, and by whomsoever

used, is sure to make impressions of its own holy character. I have never yet seen the Christian, or the man, who could open his mouth against it, on the ground of its intrinsic merits. It is admitted to comprehend every subject of prayer, and the wide scope of Scripture history, devotion, doctrine, and precept.

2. The prescribed service of the Episcopal Church is objected to as an irksome repetition, and therefore unprofitable. That the public services, under the head of Morning and Evening prayers, are the same throughout the year, is true; and I have shown, that the public prayers of other denominations, who reject these and all *prescribed* forms, are notwithstanding for the most part *set* forms; and it is equally true, that they are in general nearly a repetition. The difference in this particular is too trifling to be made of any account, especially when balanced against other considerations, which will generally be allowed to operate in favour of the Episcopal service and against these. For example: The prayers of the Episcopal Church are short, having intervals occupied by the choir and by reading of the Scriptures. This gives variety and relieves from irksomeness. The language also is pure and comprehensive, and equally adapted to all minds. Whereas, in the other case, the principal prayer is long—often uncommonly so. Not unfrequently it occupies a half hour, till everybody is tired. Besides, the language often offends good taste; the subjects are sometimes treated awkwardly, so as to give pain, instead of promoting edification; topics are occasionally touched in a manner very objectionable; and the minds of a large portion of the congregation are unavoidably occupied in criticism, rather than joining in worship. But those who habitually attend on the Episcopal service have no room for criticism, and no provocation. If they are pious and devout, the prescribed form, so far as it occurs as a repetition, is a help to their devotions. Repetition there must be in all modes of worship; it is unavoidable. And when it must occur, it is desirable, that it should be brief, comprehensive,

and pure, as in the prayers of the Episcopal Church. For those who are not pious, and consequently not absorbed in devotion, I believe, as a general fact, that the Episcopal service is less irksome and more agreeable. The frequent change and great variety are an obvious reason why it should be so. Besides, it should be recollected, that much the greater part of the services appointed for every day, and for every morning and evening, including the collects and Scriptures, are not a repetition except *once a year*—leaving out of view the part sustained by the choir, and even that has more or less variety in it. With the exception of a few short prayers offered up at intervals between other parts, the service of the Episcopal Church actually have less repetition and a greater variety, than those of any other Protestant Church. And it cannot be denied, that they are all in the highest degree Scriptural, and eminently calculated to assist devotion.

3. But there is too much getting up and sitting down, too frequent change of posture and of topic, too much interchange of different kinds of service, &c. Doubtless it does seem so to those who are not accustomed to it, and who are more used to services like the Presbyterian. But when this objection is proved experimentally, it not only vanishes, but the practices before esteemed faults are transformed into excellences. The whole system is found to accord with nature and with the spirit of closet devotion. It might be presumed, that such a ritual, the product of so many centuries of the Christian church, and of the most illustrious Saints adorning her annals, who had to do with the formation of this work, was never composed and constructed but with all the lights and suggestions of experience.

Follow the Christian to his closet, where is his Bible, his prayer and hymn books, his various manuals of devotion. He kneels and invokes God, his Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; he reads a verse, or two, or more, or a chapter of the Bible, according as his feelings incline. If a sentiment of devotion springs up in his

heart at any moment or place of his reading or meditation, he instantly gives expression to it; if any desire, he offers it up in prayer; if he feels any evil, he prays for deliverance; if his kindness for others flows out, he prays for them;—whatever emotion springs up in his bosom, he utters it, whether of sorrow for sin, of gratitude for favours, of adoration, of intercession, or of praise. If one great feeling pervades his heart, he dwells upon it, and brings it out in various forms in his addresses to the Deity. In the course of half an hour he has perhaps looked many times into his Bible, hymn book, and other devotional helps that may lie before him, and at each interval poured out his various and rapidly succeeding emotions and desires before the throne and mercy seat of God. He rises and walks his room, and kneels again; he prays; he sings, it may be; he changes his subject, his book, his posture, and passes from one act of devotion to another, just as his feelings prompt him; and his states of feeling are every moment changing, as thoughts succeed each other. This is nature in such an occupation; it is man acting out, without restraint, his own character, as a religious being, in the cultivation of religious affections. And it is very likely he will offer the same petition, word for word, many times in succession, and at every time ending it with the usual doxology and Amen. He loves to say, "Through my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" and to ascribe "praise to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." He loves to go over the same thing again and again, where his affections for the moment are strongly fixed; and he believes, that God, who is his father, is willing to hear. And he will perhaps return to the same topic many times in the same season of his retirement.

Now let it be observed, that the entire system of the Episcopal ritual is based upon this principle—viz. on the natural and various promptings of religious affections in closet devotion, so far as it can be applied to public worship. There is this difference between the two: In his closet the Christian, being alone, *follows* the promptings of his feelings; whereas a public ritual should it-

self be the prompter and the guide. In his closet the Christian is not called upon to have respect to others, but only to himself, in the course of his devotional exercises. But in public, where there are many minds and various states of feeling, the exercises of devotion should be so contrived, as to bring all these various minds, as far as possible, to the same state at the same time. In public, it is impossible, that a ritual of devotion should be conformed to the states of feeling in each individual; its aim should rather be to prompt and control feeling, but not without regard to that variety, as well as repetition, which is the spontaneous growth of the closet. The closet is the model; and the plan of public worship should be to come as near to it as possible. It is the natural flow and rapidly succeeding changes of the religious affections, which are to be regarded in the formation of a public ritual. In this view it will be seen, that the Episcopal forms and modes of worship have been ordered in wisdom; and that they demonstrate a consummate acquaintance with the human heart under the affections of religion.

4. But the common use of the ritual by all the people is a mere mockery, and sanctions hypocrisy; it is well known, that there is no devotion in the hearts of a great portion of the congregation, and they know it themselves; and the practice, in connexion with this consciousness, is in great danger of making them mere formalists for life; and consequently it is perilous to their souls.

In the early part of my residence in London I was invited to go and hear a preacher, who had the reputation of being a representative of American theology, or of a particular species of Theology, supposed to be extensively prevalent here, and which, it was imagined, might be agreeable to me. It was curious enough, that the whole argument of the sermon went to prove, that every prayer and every religious act of an unconverted sinner is not only displeasing, but in the highest degree displeasing to God. No matter how sincere the sinner may imagine himself to be, yet in fact there is no sincerity;

no matter how anxious he may be about his own salvation, even though his tears flow like a river, and he can have no rest, the greater his anxiety and the more he does on that account in the study of the Scriptures and in seeking God by prayer, the greater is his sin, till he has a new heart! It was fair to infer from all that was said in this argument, though it would have been too shocking if the preacher had brought it out, that cursing and blasphemy would be more innocent, than these religious acts in such a case!

I said to the gentleman, who had invited and accompanied me, as we were going home, I could not, in conscience, deny, that such doctrine had prevailed to some extent in America; but that, in justice to the country, I must declare the imputation, if intended to characterize American preaching in general, a libel.

That any persons should fail to enter into the spirit of the forms of public worship, on which they are accustomed to attend, is certainly to be regretted; but I am not aware, that this is a sin peculiar to Episcopalians. It may possibly be more visible among them; but in all honesty I do not think it is more prevalent. What is the appearance of any person in a religious congregation, but an ostensible profession of worship? The reigning public conscience of the community is in favour of religion; and the ordinances of public worship are God's appointed means, not only of edification to Christians, but of bringing unconverted men—sinners, who in their conscience respect religion—home to himself. For the most part, those who use the solemn, and as it must be confessed by all, the appropriate ritual of the Episcopal Church, may charitably be supposed to have a respect for its doctrine and sentiments; and in the exercise of the same charity, it may also be presumed, that their conscience goes with the service. On the last point, there is in most cases no doubt.

There is just as much reason for the Ministry of the Church to call on all the people to engage and take part in the public services of the Sanctuary, as for the Christian father and head of a family to call around the altar

of his household his children and domestics, and exhort them to join in the acts of devotion, whatever be their form, in which he leads. Both institutions are suitable and good, and have the same general design; and all the objections, which can be brought against one, lie with equal force against the other. It may be hoped, that he who can be induced to join formally and habitually in acts of social and public worship, will also by that very means, under the blessing of God, be brought to a participation in the grace and spirit of that worship. Certainly it must be granted, that it is more hopeful and better to do it, than not to do it. I think, indeed, it may be satisfactorily shown, that a formal and actual participation in the ordinary uses of the public ritual of the Episcopal Church, other things being equal, is more likely to issue in a cordial acquiescence in the requirements of the Gospel, than the passive and taciturn habit of the Presbyterian and some other denominations. The mere suggestion of this idea, I am disposed to believe, will generally be convincing. This suggestion is the more forcible, when we consider, that the temper of the age and of the public mind is favourable to the possession and exemplification of the graces of practical piety in all their legitimate bearings—which is an undoubted fact.

5. The audible responses of the congregation are objected to as improper, unprofitable, and tending to confusion.

As to the charge of confusion, inasmuch as it is an appointed order, well understood, conformed to without difficulty in the manner intended, and to those concerned is in no sense confusion, it requires no reply. That it is improper, if it suits the feelings of the denomination, I cannot see, or feel. In all ages religious congregations have been accustomed to make responses to official performances, in one form or another: So did the Hebrews; so do the Jews still; and so have Christians from the beginning, with the exception of some Protestant sects, who have probably laid aside this practice, rather for the sake of setting up a *difference* under the name of an *improvement*, than for any good reasons, as is the fact in

some other changes. I think it cannot fairly be made a question of propriety, but of taste and habit; and may therefore be lawful with those who like it.

As to its profitableness, it may be remarked, that it is not only an ostensible, and with true worshippers, a rea-expression of sympathy, but it is calculated to give greater effect to the power of sympathy, and to kindle livelier sentiments of devotion in the hearts of those who engage in these offices. What Christian does not know by experience the difference in the state and activity of his religious feelings, while engaged in the duties of the closet, when in one case his devotions are only mental, and in the other he gives them an audible expression? The mere sound of his own voice on his own ear, in the utterance of his emotions, and the effect of natural and appropriate intonations, give a new character and an increased ardour and vigour to those sentiments. It is hardly possible for him to realize the full benefit of private devotions, when deprived of this privilege. It is in truth and in all experience the most indispensable and most active means of kindling devotion to its purest and most glowing fires.

And if such be the effect in the closet, how much more in the public congregation, where the mysterious and amazing power of sympathy comes in to give character and intensity to the devotions of the house of God? Such beyond all question is the natural tendency, and such the design of this practice. It is intended, moreover, that every one present should feel that he is a worshipper, and that he should sustain his own part. It makes all participants in concert, besides, that it gives to each, even in this public place, the additional privilege of the closet. While he reads and prays and sings in company with those around him, enjoying and communicating the power of sympathy, he also reads and prays and sings, as one alone in the presence of God, and in his earthly sanctuary. There is, perhaps, no feature of the Episcopal ritual, that is founded more in nature—that is better adapted to man as he is—and of course, none more demonstrative of wisdom, and of experience in the char-

acter and operations of piety, as well as in the means of assisting and promoting it. It is true, this privilege may be abused; so may anything else. It may fail of its intended effect over undevout minds; and so may any other and whatever means.

6. But with all these advantages, Episcopalians have no religion; they are mere formalists.

Alas! I am ashamed! It is pleasant, however, to observe, that an answer to the prayer incorporated in the Litany of the Episcopal ritual—"from all uncharitableness, good Lord, deliver us"—is beginning to a great extent to be realized, as an apparent result of this, or of some other influence. It is certainly true, that the different denominations of Christians are more charitable and more kind towards each other now, than they were an age ago. There is, however, one remarkable exception to this, in which the reverse is equally and painfully true. I do not mean in the case of an entire denomination, but of a large class of Christians and Christian ministers in our country, who have allowed themselves to be driven to extremes on several important subjects, appertaining to existing interests of society. In view of this exception and its converse, it is strikingly true, that we live in the most charitable and most uncharitable age. The majority of Christians are accustomed to manifest great kindness towards those, who happen to differ from them in some peculiarities of their several denominations; at the same time there is abroad in the land a large class of the severest and most uncompromising denunciators of those, who do not fall in with their extravagant ultraisms. This spirit, however, is the natural fruit of ultra doctrines and an ultra position. The doctrine and the position beget the spirit; and the spirit is no less a sure indication of the position and the doctrine. The spirit is the flag—the standard thrown out in the wind, flapping and snapping in the ears of the public.

It does not become me to volunteer, as the defender of the piety of the Episcopal church. I may say, however, in all good conscience, that I have always blushed at the charge now under consideration, whenever it has

saluted my ears, as unbecoming and injurious. Of my Presbyterian and Congregational brethren, both ministers and laymen, as a body, I may say with all sincerity, and am bound in honesty to say—that I respect and love them for the decided, hopeful, and interesting exemplifications of Christian piety and zeal, which I have long witnessed in their ranks. I believe—I am bound to testify—that their Christian character, in matters most important and hopeful of good to our country and to the world, has greatly improved within the limits of my intimacy and fellowship among them.

Without pretending to assume any definite point, or presuming to make invidious comparisons, I think I may also say, supported by the common opinion of the religious public, that no Christian denomination in our land has improved more in the same time, as to their piety and efficiency, than the Episcopalians. And over most of the others they have one great advantage: they are harmonious. It was impossible for me not to observe, during a month's residence in Philadelphia, last autumn, the prosperous and happy state of religion in the Episcopal churches of that city, as compared with the pernicious effects of public religious controversy, so obvious, in the Presbyterian churches of the same city. Independent of my own impressions, a friend called my attention one day to a letter he had been writing, declarative of the same prominent fact, as the result of his own observations. The American Episcopal church seems of late years to have risen to a sense of her responsibilities: she has established theological seminaries; is calling out and training young men to increase the ranks of her ministry; she has entered into the spirit of missions, domestic and foreign; and God hath blessed her abundantly within her own pale, in fulfilment of his own engagement, "that he who watereth shall himself be watered."

7. The numerous holy days and saint's days, appointed or recommended to be observed, in the Episcopal liturgy, are objected to as relics of the Romish superstitions.

As a theory, independent of these fragments of history,

it would seem very suitable, that the most remarkable events of our Saviour's earthly abode, from his nativity to his ascension, should be, in some form and by special ordinances, commemorated. Whether the very week of the year, or day of the month, can be precisely determined, is not of material importance, if Christians can be agreed on any assumed dates for the respective events. It must be evident, that such observances are calculated to fix and preserve in the public mind the remembrances suggested by them; and to do it more effectually, than could be realized in the want of them, in the same manner as our Fourth of July keeps alive the recollection and sentiments proper to be cherished in relation to that eventful period of our history; in the same manner as the 22d of February reminds us of the Father of our Country; and in the same manner as the annual celebration of any remarkable event or epoch, distinguished in history for good or evil to mankind generally, or to any community, may serve to inspire with gratitude, hope, and courage, if the event was a blessing, or with admonition and caution, if it was an evil.

And what harm in setting up like perpetual memorials, if there is room for them, to such names as the most distinguished of the Apostles, Evangelists, Christian martyrs of the earlier and later ages, and of the most eminent saints, that belong to past history? Is not their history inspiring and profitable to contemplate? Is it proper—is it well to let their names, their example, and their virtues go into oblivion? Can it be honestly averred, independent of the supposed origin and mediate descent of some of these appointments, that the use made of them in the Episcopal church, is likely to have, or does have any bad effect? Viewed as a theory, the objection falls; and I am not aware that the practice is found to be vicious in its tendency. Every question of this kind, to be determined fairly, must be decided on the simple ground of its own merits, apart from the influence of prejudice.

But who are they that make this objection? I will suppose, for example, that they are Presbyterians and Con-

gregationalists. Well, let us try them by their own rule: It is a singular fact, that within the limits of about twenty years, and for the most part in much less time than that, a calender of stated religious occasions, or holy days, has been made up, adopted, and gone into general use throughout these two denominations, much more crowded, as I am inclined to believe—though I have not taken the trouble of counting the lists in the two cases for comparison—than the corresponding calender of holy days, adopted and recommended by the Episcopal Church, which have grown principally out of events scattered along the entire line of eighteen centuries. And in addition to these, there are constantly occurring numerous special and extemporaneous appointments, which, in their number, added to the amount of time allotted to their observance, probably exceed the calender of stated occasions of the same class. There is a monthly Concert,* (of prayer) so called, at least for every week in the year, and I believe somewhat in excess of this, assigned each to its specific object, as for example, to Christian missions generally—which I believe is the primitive institution of the kind; to the Sabbath school enterprise; to the Tract cause and efforts; to the cause of Sailors; to the Temperance reformation; to abolition of Slavery; to Christian mothers' associations—which in many cases is weekly; to Revivals of religion; and to numerous other specific occasions, already gone into extensive, and many of them into general observance. I suppose it would be moderate to state the monthly Concerts, which are very generally observed, at *seventy-five* a year. There is a large class of other stated and extemporaneous religious occasions, obtaining and receiving a great share of the attention of the religious public of these two denominations, amounting in all, I should think, if we include the entire list of every sort above specified, to not less than *two hundred* a year, independent of the Sabbath. Of course I do not mean, that

* The English Christians object to this name, concert, because it unfortunately suggests among them a kind of theatrical exhibition of music. But the same reason does not have equal force with us.

each of these has got into general use; but probably not less than *one hundred and fifty* of them are very widely observed, and that too by the same individuals.

This surprising list of religious occasions, or holy days, stated and special, has all grown up within about twenty years. The original monthly Concert, on the subject of general missions, has long since attained to a very sacred estimation; and so in its train have several others of the same class, though falling somewhat behind, as regards the interest felt in them. There are several annual Concerts, to which very great importance is attached, as the first Monday in the year, for the world; a day in February, for colleges; another for the cause of Temperance; and some others, the specific design of which I am not possessed of.

Of course I do not refer to these appointments to object to them. Many of them I have long sympathized with, and observed religiously for the design of their institution. My only object is to bring them up in array before those, who are supposed to object to the comparative paucity of stated religious observances, or holy days, which are to be found in the religious calender of the Episcopal church, that it may be seen, which party in fact has the most, the complainants or the accused.

It may not be improper, however—it may be instructive—to inquire for the moving springs of these recent and numerous appointments for the religious public of our country. As a general fact, the public, as a body, have never been consulted; and it is equally true, for the most part, that ecclesiastical authorities have not been prime movers in this business; but nearly all of them have originated in the minds of individuals, or in a small circle of individuals. Favoured by the spirit of the times, and by the prevailing appetite for the multiplication of appointments of this kind, it has only been necessary to propound, no matter from what quarter or by whom, and to begin a new one; and almost immediately it has been taken up, and gone into a more or less general observance. I do not pretend to say, that these conventional arrangements are worthy of less respect on that account;

or that they are less important, or less useful; but the fact undoubtedly is, that the public generally have not been consulted in their introduction; that ecclesiastical authorities, and other highly influential religious associations have rarely been consulted, till after these appointments have originated, and been forced upon them; but they have generally emanated from such obscure sources, that it would be very difficult to trace any considerable number to their moving cause.

That a reasonable number of these appointments may be useful, I think, will hardly be doubted by Christians; and that the public have been drawn into an excess of such observances, I think, is no less true. To show how easy it has been to originate them, I shall take the liberty to state, that one of the most interesting, and as I think decidedly one of the most worthy of all—I mean the first Monday of the year, which is observed as a holy day throughout the United States, and extensively in Great Britain—was actually started and received its original impulse at the suggestion of a lady! She conceived it, proposed it, and had the personal influence to get it under way, until it has obtained the sanction and recommendation of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, of how many and what other religious bodies of this country I do not know, of the wide Christian public of Presbyterians and Congregationalists generally, and of the Congregationalists in England through the recommendation of their General Union! I believe this observance has obtained more attention, excited more interest, and is likely to do more good, than any other of the entire list. The first and only one I have had the opportunity of attending, since it was started, was the first Monday of the current year, 1836. And then I was engaged with a highly respected and esteemed pastor and his flock for five hours of the day in public—two hours and a half in the morning and two and a half in the afternoon; and a very pleasant and profitable season it was. The interest of these uncommonly long services was well sustained by the superior tact of my clerical brother in the management of such a meeting.

The origin and progress of this religious day, from its beginning to its present date, as illustrative of the principle, "Great effects from little causes," is a curious and instructive piece of history. It is substantially a type of most of the others, now under consideration, but more impressive than either. Nearly all of them have arisen in some such way, until the year has got to be literally crowded with them. It is instructive, as it shows under what influence our religious world has been brought: Few of the religious and benevolent movements of the day have originated in the high and supervising religious bodies, and thence spread themselves out over the masses of the community; but they have more generally sprung up from sources so obscure, as not to be generally known, and risen and extended their influence into every region of society. So far as they are good, it is no matter where they came from, or who first proposed them; but there is in fact more zeal than discretion in the quarters whence these emanations have burst forth upon the public, inasmuch as it seems to be imagined, that we can never have enough of a good thing. I am clearly of the opinion, that, in the present state of things, since these matters have got well agoing, it would be safe for the popular ranks and the ladies to resign a reasonable share of this influence to the clergy, and let those now lead and guide, who have heretofore been driven. I think, indeed, it would be a prudent and wise change.

In the same manner as in a former chapter we have seen, that the operation of the principle of Episcopacy, without its proper form, carried into various high and influential religious organizations in our own country, has in fact assumed higher powers, and become far more energetic, than Episcopacy proper—nay, has left genuine Episcopacy out of sight in this particular, and clothed it with comparative mildness, which, as has been shown, is its real character; so also has the religious public of this country been recently so flooded with new religious appointments, or holy days, stated and special, as perhaps to equal, and for aught I know, to overmatch the religious calender of the Church of Rome. Certainly, the orders

and customs of the American Episcopal church in the appointment and observance of similar occasions, stand forth in the light of such comparison, as moderation itself.

It is these excessive, multitudinous, and often long *protracted* religious occasions, together with the spirit that is in them, which have been for some years breaking up and breaking down the clergy of this land. It has been breaking them *up*. It is commonly observed, that a new era has lately come over the Christian congregations of our country in regard to the permanence of the pastoral relation. Time was in the memory of those now living, when the settlement of a minister was considered of course a settlement for life. But now, as everybody knows, this state of things is entirely broken up; and it is perhaps true, that on an average, the clergy of this country do not remain more than five years in the same place. And it is impossible they should in the present state of things. They could not stand it. So numerous are their engagements; so full of anxiety is their condition in a fevered state of the public mind, acting upon them from all directions; so consuming are their labours, in the study and in public, pressed and urged upon them, by the demands of the time; and withal so fickle has the popular mind become under a system, that is for ever demanding some new and still more exciting measure—some new society—some new monthly or weekly meeting, which perhaps soon grows into a religious holyday—some special effort running through many days, sometimes lasting for weeks, calling for public labours of ministers, of the most exciting kind, throughout each day from the earliest hour of the morning to a late hour of night;—for reasons and facts of this kind so abundant, and now so obvious to the public, that they need only to be referred to to be seen and appreciated, it is impossible that ministers should remain long in the same place. Their mental and physical energies become exhausted, and they are compelled to change, first. because it is not in the power of man to satisfy the appetite for novelties, which is continually and from all quarters making its insatiate de-

mands upon them; and next, that, if possible, they may purchase a breathing time, and a transient relief from the overwhelming pressure of their cares and labours.

But alas! there is no relief: They are not only broken up, but they find themselves fast breaking down. Wherever they go, there is the same demand for the same scene to be acted over. There is—there can be no stability in the pastoral relation in such a state of the public mind; and what is still more melancholy and affecting, the pastors themselves cannot endure it—they cannot live. They are not only constantly fluctuating—literally afloat on the wide surface of the community—but their health is undermined—their spirits are sinking—and they are fast treading upon each other's heels to the grave, their only land of rest.

Never since the days of the Apostles was a country blessed with so enlightened, pious, orthodox, faithful, willing clergy, as the United States of America at this moment; and never did a ministry, so worthy of trust, have so little independence to act according to their conscience and best discretion. They are literally the victims of a spiritual tyranny, that has started up and burst upon the world in a new form—at least with an extent of sway, that has never been known. It is an influence, which comes up from the lowest conditions of life, which is vested in the most ignorant minds—and therefore the more unbending and uncontrollable. It is an influence, which has been fostered and blown into a wide spread flame, by a class of itinerating ministers, who have suddenly started up and overrun the land, decrying and denouncing all that have not yielded at once to their sway—by direct and open efforts shaking and destroying public confidence in the settled and more permanent ministry—leaving old paths and striking out new ones—demolishing old systems and substituting others—and disturbing and deranging the whole order of society, as it had existed before. And it is to this new state of things, so harassing, so destructive to health and life, that the regular ministry of this country—the best qualified, most pious, most faithful, and in all respects the most worthy

Christian ministry, that the church has ever enjoyed in any age—are made the victims. They cannot resist it—they are overwhelmed by it.

Doubtless, there is a redeeming spirit in reserve; I could not confide in Providence, if I did not believe it. The clergy of this land are worth too much to be lost—to be sacrificed. I trust it will not be long before they will be able to assert their prerogatives, and recover their appropriate influence.

Having disposed of the most common and popular objections to the Liturgy and forms of the Episcopal Church, it may not be unsuitable to say a word or two on certain of its *modes* of worship, in contradistinction from those of others.

Take for example the mode of kneeling and offering a silent prayer, which is prescribed to worshippers, as they enter and take their seats in the house of God. I say, kneeling—for that is the posture recommended, although many do it standing. How different this from that entrance to these holy places and for these religious and solemn purposes, and from that taking up of position there, which carries in it no indication of the place or of the occasion, and which is common in its mode with that of any popular assembly coming together for secular or political purposes! No matter what any person may say against this—no matter how much declamation may be exhausted to throw it into disesteem—no one can witness the scene without being impressed with its suitableness, without feeling its power.

And see that man of God, ascending the reading desk or the pulpit, in his sacerdotal vestments, before the congregation: He kneels; he bends himself before God; he prays—but all in silence! Who can see and not feel it? The kneeling of the minister and of the congregation for the offering up of prayers, where they occur in the orders of the service; the standing for singing, reading the Gospels, Creeds, and some other portions of the Liturgy; the coming around and kneeling before the altar to receive the Communion; the waiting and kneel-

ing for a silent prayer after the benediction has been pronounced;—and various other modes, not indeed exclusively used by the Episcopal Church, but nearly all of which are wanting in most Presbyterian and Congregational Churches, are, as most persons will feel, altogether seemly and appropriate—suited to the house of God and the place of prayer. That prejudice against the excess of like ceremonies and the multitudinous genuflexions and crossings and flourishes of the papal priests and worshippers, should have prevailed to banish all these decencies and proprieties from the place of Divine worship, is indeed to be regretted.

It is, however, to be remarked, that the Christian public of this country are gradually returning to many of these practices; and that the good sense and better taste of the people are prevailing over prejudice. It may be alarming to some, that Presbyterians should begin to build Gothic churches, and that the symbol of the Cross should now and then appear in or upon them; that the loud and solemn organ is so often heard in their places of worship; that their ministers, in increasing numbers, should be seen ascending the pulpit in gown and bands; that the custom of kneeling in family and public worship should be so extensively introduced among them; and that many of them should even be seen offering up a silent prayer, when they take their station in the house of God. But it proves, that for all the evils, with which the passion for religious novelties has flooded the land, there has come in their train this good: a great subduing of unreasonable prejudice.

The Episcopal Church of this country has been under a cloud ever since the revolution, which procured our national independence; and indeed, ever since it was transplanted from the parent stock; but that cloud is being rapidly dispersed. First, though there were some good and exemplary clergymen of the Church of England, who came over to Virginia, and who were found in that colony till the revolution, yet, as happens in all colonies and new settlements, that are flooded with adventurers of all classes, and sometimes not of the best, so

did it happen in the church of Virginia and in the sister church of the colony of Lord Baltimore, that the clergy were not in all respects such as they ought to be; and at last, when the Church of England was prostrated in Virginia by the revolution, her property confiscated, and her ministry broken up and many of them banished by the necessities of their condition, the wreck left behind a scene of desolation, which half a century has scarcely repaired.* From that period the American Episcopal Church has been doomed to encounter popular prejudice more than any other, principally on account of the known vices of the parent church, resulting from her connexion with the state. The descendants of the Puritans, who for the most part have occupied New-England, have from the beginning felt and cherished more or less aversion to Episcopacy and to all that appertained to it, as might have been expected from the sufferings and sacrifices experienced by their fathers in the days of the intolerant prelacy of England. Every church that abuses its power and influence, will sooner or later reap what she has sown, and be doomed by Providence to work out an atonement before the world for her public faults. The great law of "visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children" applies here as elsewhere; and the American Episcopal Church for half a century and more has been suffering the award of this principle of God's providential government. But the days of her atonement, of her depression, and of her mourning are ended; and now a voice seems to be calling to her out of heaven: "Arise; shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

She *has* risen; the church of Virginia, which suffered most, has been thoroughly redeemed. Throughout the land the Episcopal Church has greatly improved; she has established a polity and government corresponding with the civil and social condition of the country; from past and sad experience, she revolts from all thoughts of alliance with the state; she thoroughly eschews all meddling with

* See the History of the Church in Virginia, by the Rev. Dr. Hawks.

politics; and stands up before the public under constitutional and canon regulations, intelligible and most satisfactory to all reasonable minds; and which must obviously secure all popular rights, be safe for all, remove just grounds of complaint, inspire confidence, and command respect.

I shall here take leave to conclude this chapter by the following statement of the merits of the Liturgy of the Church of England, from one of her reverend divines, Dr. Comber:—

"Though all churches in the world have and ever have had forms of prayer; yet none was ever blessed with so comprehensive, so exact, so inoffensive a composure, as ours; and yet so plain, that the most ignorant may pray with understanding; so full, that nothing is omitted, which is fit to be asked in public, and so particular that it compriseth most things which we would ask in private; and yet so short, as not to tire any that hath true devotion. Its doctrine is pure and primitive; its ceremonies so few and innocent, that most of the Christian world agree in them. Its method is exact and natural; its language significant and perspicuous, most of the words and phrases being taken out of the Holy Scriptures, and the rest are the expressions of the first and the purest ages—so that whoever takes exception at these, must quarrel with the language of the Holy Ghost, and fall out with the church in her greatest innocence; and in the opinion of the most impartial and excellent Grotius—who was no member of, nor had any obligation to this church—'The English Liturgy comes so near to the primitive pattern, that none of the reformed churches can compare with it.'

"And if anything *external* be needful to recommend that which is so glorious *within*, we may add, that the compilers were most of them men of great piety and learning, and several of them either martyrs or confessors upon the restitution of Popery (in Queen Mary's reign), which (fact) as it declares their piety, so doth the judicious digesting of these prayers evidence their

learning. For therein a scholar may discern close logic, pleasing rhetoric, pure Divinity, and the very marrow of the ancient doctrine and discipline; and yet all made so familiar, that the unlearned may say—Amen.

"Lastly, all these excellences have obtained that universal reputation which these prayers enjoy in all the world; so that they are most deservedly admired by the Eastern churches, and had in great esteem by the most eminent Protestants beyond sea (on the Continent), who are the most impartial judges that can be desired. In short, this Liturgy is honoured by all but the Romanist, whose interest it opposeth, and the Dissenter, whose prejudices will not let them see its lustre.* Whence it is that they (Dissenters) call that, which Papists hate because it is Protestant, superstitious and popish. But when we consider, that the best things in a bad world have the most enemies, as it doth not lessen its worth, so it must not abate our esteem, because it hath malicious and misguided adversaries.

"How endless it is to dispute with these, the little success of the best arguments, managed by the wisest men, do too sadly testify. Wherefore, we shall endeavour to convince the enemies, by assisting the friends of our church devotions; and by drawing the veil, which the ignorance and indevotion of some and the passion and prejudice of others have cast over them, represent the Liturgy in its true and native lustre, which is so lovely and ravishing, that like the purest beauties, it needs no supplement of art and dressing, but conquers by its own attractions, and wins the affections of all but

* As this was written long ago, it does not now apply to Dissenters in England. Having been intimate with them while I was in that country, I can say with pleasure, that I never discovered among dissenting ministers and the most enlightened of their laity any degree of prejudice against the Liturgy, but rather a partiality in favour of it. Indeed, the entire Liturgy is actually used in a vast many dissenting chapels of London and over the kingdom. The whole of Lady Huntington's connexion use it; it is used in Whitfield's Chapels, at Tottenham Court Road, and at the Tabernacle, Moorfields; and in many others that might be named. I am clearly of opinion, that there is little or no obstacle in the way of the return of the great majority of Dissenters to the bosom of the English church, except the union of church and state.

those who do not see it clearly. This will be sufficient to show, that whoever desires no more than to worship God with zeal and knowledge, spirit and truth, purity and sincerity, may do it by these devout forms. And to this end may the God of peace give us all meek hearts, quiet spirits, and devout affections; free us from all sloth and prejudice, that we may have full churches, frequent prayers, and fervent charity; that, uniting in our prayers here, we may all join in his praises hereafter, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

CHAPTER IV.

Consideration of the Claims of Episcopacy.

I HAVE hitherto left untouched this question, which is generally made first and principal in public discussions—I dislike the word *controversy*—between Episcopalians and those who differ from them—I have an equal aversion to the word *opponents*. Both these terms, which I thoroughly eschew, are bad in the religious world, or anywhere else. The bare use of them tends to conjure up the very spirit, which they involve and represent. I am clearly of opinion, not only, that we have come to a time and to a state of society, when the public will refuse to tolerate the sharpness of religious controversy, and the bitterness of religious opponents, when indulged in after the manner and to the extent that have characterized so many ages, and from which I would fain hope the present age is being redeemed, first by a general aversion in the moral sense of the community, and next through the influence of Christian courtesy and of more bland religious affections;—but I believe also, that all differences in religion, whether they relate to doctrine, or practice, or ecclesiastical polity, may be *discussed* in perfect good temper, so as not to disturb personal feeling, or public tranquillity. I believe, moreover, that such discussion is both necessary and good, so long as those who differ from us are treated with a kindness and respect, which would entitle us to meet them as personal friends, if otherwise convenient; and which could never create in our bosoms a conscience to make us reluctant to meet them, or in any degree to diminish or mar the cheerfulness of our intercourse. The fact, that differences as to the doctrine and general economy of Christianity are more or less prevalent, even among those who are worthy of

the greatest respect for their piety, their learning, and Christian zeal, is proof, that truth on these points is not yet so clearly and fully developed, as to supercede the necessity of discussion. There is nothing required to render it salutary and useful, but a suitable exemplification of Christian courtesy and kindness in the manner of conducting it. No matter how much of the *fortiter in re*, if it be adequately tempered with the *suaviter in modo*. The former may give dignity and manliness to him who displays it, and augment the respect in which he shall be held by the public; while the latter, infused throughout and pervading this adjunct quality, and imparting to it the charm of loveliness, will secure for him the favourable regard and kind affections, even of those who maintain an opposite opinion.

As an interesting exemplification of this spirit, I may refer to the late public discussion of the claims of Episcopacy between Bishop Onderdonk, of Philadelphia, and the Rev. Albert Barnes, of the same city. So entirely satisfied are Episcopalians with Mr. Barnes's spirit—and his known ability may vouch for the fact of his having made the best of the argument—that they have published the entire discussion on both sides, in connexion with some other papers, under the title of EPISCOPACY EXAMINED AND RE-EXAMINED, having issued it from the Protestant Episcopal Press at New-York. This is as it should be; it is pleasant—it is delightful to contemplate. It shows in the first place, that Episcopalians are not unwilling to have the best argument that can be made against them brought side by side with their own statements, to be laid before their own people, if it be done in good temper; and next, that we have come to a state of society, when all religious differences may be managed in this way—when it may be done not only with impunity to personal and public feeling, but for the general interests of truth.

But for all I have to say, or desire to say, on the claims of Episcopacy, I beg leave to premise, that I do not purpose to undertake a task which has been so well and so thoroughly done by others—by those, who were

far better qualified, than I can pretend to be. It has long been a principle with me, that a writer is not wise in presuming to claim the attention of the public on an exhausted and threadbare topic, unless in some peculiar exigence of the times he may hope to be able to bring it out in some new light. The argument for the claims of Episcopacy has been so well done and is so complete, that it would be high presumption in me to imagine, that I can add to its light or force. For common and popular reading, I know not, that I can refer to anything more succinct, lucid, and satisfactory, than the work above mentioned, as embracing the discussion between Bishop Onderdonk and the Rev. Mr. Barnes. For the scholar and the more learned, who may wish and who have leisure to extend these investigations further, I may mention Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, Potter on Church Government, Slater's Original Draft, Skinner on Episcopacy, Works on Episcopacy, (the last being a collection of tracts in two volumes.)

But my own purpose in coming to this topic is to make a few general and comprehensive statements of certain prominent considerations and facts, which, I must confess, have had force in my own mind, and which, perhaps, may have some weight with others. It will doubtless be deemed proper—probably it will be expected—that in presenting to the public REASONS FOR PREFERRING EPISCOPACY, in my circumstances, I should not altogether pass over this material point. But I hope I shall be excused—and I am inclined to think the patience of my readers will gladly excuse me—from undertaking to support in detail all those parts of the argument, which some of these statements will necessarily indicate and involve. I propose rather to *suggest*, than to construct an argument; rather to *refer* to considerations and facts, that have had an influence with me, than to array them in the order and form of a demonstration. The common reading on this subject is within everybody's reach, who may desire to examine it for himself.

The simple statement for the claims of Episcopacy is,

first, that the Bible indicates and by fair inference authorizes and requires a ministry over the Christian church, which, in the structure of its economy, and in its design, shall involve and support in its purity the *principle* of Episcopacy, in some such definite form, as is generally maintained under this name; and next, that the history of the church corroborates and establishes the same position.

I have purposely left out of this statement the common denominations of this ministry, for the purpose of coming at and exposing the principle in its naked form. The moment we invest with an array of terms a principle, which has been held by one party and rejected by another under these terms, we necessarily prejudice an argument with those, who have been always accustomed to look at it *through* the medium of this palpable form.

I assume, that Christ intended *office* in the ministrations of his earthly kingdom. This will doubtless be granted by the majority of those who may differ from me, as to the character of that office—or of those offices. The idea of *office* is primary, radical, important—so important that I cannot conceive it possible for the objects of this kingdom to be attained without it. I have already betrayed an opinion in another place, that office is the hinge of Christ's visible kingdom; that the entire fabric hangs and turns upon it; that it is *through* the ministry, and through them *alone*, that all the members have their visible connexion with the Head. But although so much as this may not be conceded to me by those with whom I have to do, yet doubtless they will allow great importance to office; and that it must have *authority* in it. I need not affirm, that authority is an inseparable attribute of office; and that it is its essence, the form and administration thereof being accidents. But it will be seen, that the accident of form in this case is of most material importance, that the public, the world, may know beyond a doubt what and whom to respect as invested with this authority. The form is the only visible sign—the only palpable badge of authority; and if that cannot be determined, then clearly, all is loose, all uncertain—the king-

dom falls, as to its visibility, for lack of authority to set it up and to sustain it.

Evidently, if we must believe that the Head of the Church has made all necessary provisions for the visible economy of his kingdom—which, I think, should be assumed as an axiom—there must be found somewhere in the setting up of that kingdom those arrangements, which such an axiom supposes. Moreover, the principle of this axiom runs through all time, and makes it equally necessary, that these arrangements, or provisions, should be found in *uninterrupted succession*, as that they should be found in the *beginning*. If there has been a chasm, a break, anywhere, "the gates of hell have prevailed." Certainly they have, if that chasm is so vast, that break so wide, that no man can see over it—that no one can tell us what was beyond it.

I think myself warranted, therefore, to take this axiom in hand, and to say, that whatever of visible authority, whatever of definite form and order was necessary to *constitute* the Christian ministry—and if there was any ministry at all, having authority, it must have been *definite*—that form and that order must be *distinctly traceable* on the map of the history of the Church of Christ, from the Apostles down to this time. No matter how many may have been "the dark ages," or *how* dark they were; no matter what obscurity may rest on any portion of church history; to say, to admit, that that obscurity is so deep, that those periods were so dark, that nothing can be known, that no certainty can be obtained on this point—is to admit, that the primitive, and of course the appropriate visibility of Christ's kingdom—in other words, that the ministry, which the Apostles set up, has been lost—and lost for ever. I must beg leave to insist, that the necessity of such a perpetuity is an axiom in this argument. It would be impossible for me to repose that confidence in the Head of the Church, which I wish to feel and do feel, as having made all necessary and indispensable provisions for the perpetual maintenance of his visible kingdom, and as having sustained those provisions by his providence, if I did not take this ground.

In accordance with the principle of this axiom we find, that there is *one*, and *only* one definite form of the Christian ministry, that can be traced distinctly and satisfactorily *through all ages* back to the ministry of the Apostles —and that form, as I need not say, is Episcopacy. I am not aware, that there is any sort of claim for any other ministry, as having been perpetual—uninterrupted; or that there can be any reasonable, credible denial, that this has been so.

It is true, indeed, if the Presbyterian be allowed to assume, that the ministry set up by the Apostles was after his model, then it will only follow, that Episcopacy, which can be distinctly traced back to the Apostles, as the only form of the ministry existing for many centuries in the church, was a change, and of course an usurpation, introduced as soon as the Apostles had rested from their labours; and that, not till these latter days, has the Christian ministry been *reduced* by Presbyterians and others to its primitive form. This is, indeed, a great stretch, a long reach of assumption, which, as seems to me, is as far beyond the potency of common belief to receive, as it is beyond modesty to claim.

Is it credible, that the economy of the Christian ministry should have been vitiated so soon—immediately—and that by conscientious men, successors of the Apostles, who were perfectly well acquainted with their practice? It is not only setting at naught the axiom, which I have referred to, and in which I humbly think is vested the vitality of the Saviour's visible kingdom; but it assumes, that the wisdom of the Apostles, who are supposed to have been divinely inspired for this purpose, and of course, that the wisdom and power of God *failed* in the very outset of this stupendous enterprise of setting up a kingdom to swallow up all other kingdoms! It follows from this assumption, that the primitive and indispensable economy of its organization could not endure even for a single age, and was not restored again for fourteen centuries! Have not then "the gates of hell prevailed?"

But why should this amazing assumption of the Presbyterian be allowed? What reasonable claim for it?

Our axiom demands that we should find a perpetual ministry in a definite form; and Episcopacy is the only ministry, that has been uninterrupted.

If, therefore, we find Episcopacy in all ages back to the Apostles—which, I think can hardly be denied—and if, moreover, there is no other ministry to be found without interruption, it only remains to determine, whether such was the polity and government used and set up by the Apostles.

Can there be a doubt, that the Apostles were the supreme *supervisors* of the churches, which they planted? Here, then, we have it at once—the very thing we are seeking for: A College of Bishops in the College of Apostles. Let it be observed—we have at present nothing to do with names—we are in quest of a principle—a distinct principle. Was the government of the primitive churches, as administered by the Apostles, based on the Episcopal principle, or not? Obviously, whoever may be the jurors sitting on this simple question, be they Presbyterians, or Lutherans, or Methodists, or Baptists, or any others, or all together, their verdict must be unanimous: The Apostles, and they alone supervised and governed the churches which they planted; they brought in associates; they appointed successors; and they finally left the entire work in the hands of successors.

The supervision and control of the Apostles, then, *nemine contra dicente*, with the united voice of all concerned in this question—was strictly and purely Episcopal. Observe: this position is taken up on the naked principle, all names and grades of office out of view. All will concede, that it was proper for the Apostles to supervise their own work; that they were competent and most fit, because they were under Divine inspiration and guidance; and that they did so.

We find, then, Episcopacy in the College of Apostles, distinct, palpable, undoubted. We find it also in all succeeding history, and in all parts of the world, where branches of the primitive church are to be found. The simple questions, then, that remain, are—Did the Apostles *establish* this form of government, to be carried into

use, and to be sustained after their demise, and onward? And what was the *definite* form of the ministry thus set up?

It cannot be denied, that the Apostles were invested with peculiar prerogatives—one of which was, authoritative inspiration for inditing public records of doctrine, precept, prophecy, &c.—and another to determine and arrange a ministerial and church organization. What other peculiar prerogatives they might have been charged with, I do not know that it is essential for the purpose now in view to determine. It is evident, that there must have been a line between their *peculiar* prerogatives and those which were *common* to themselves and to those, whom they admitted as associates and appointed as successors.

The peculiar prerogatives of the Apostles were doubtless *official* as parts of a special commission; but not as parts of a permanent ministry. What, then, of the properly *official* was common to them and to other ministers, whom they ordained, and who succeeded them? One self-evident rule to determine this question is—that which is *necessary* in all times and places, such as authority to preach the Gospel and administer its ordinances; power of supervision and control; power to appoint and ordain other ministers to do the same; general power to set and keep in order the ministry and churches by prescribed rules; &c.

We may ask with propriety: Were the appointing, supervisory, and controlling powers of the Apostles a *pattern*—a *model?* Doubtless they were. To what extent, then? To the extent of necessity, be it more or less. Was their *superior* relation to other ministers a peculiar prerogative, or a pattern? This may be determined by the economy, which they may seem to have constituted. The instructions given by Paul to Timothy and Titus are decisive. In those Epistles grades of ministerial office are most clearly developed; and Timothy and Titus are recognised, not only as being *superiors*, but as having power of appointment, or ordination. They evidently had general appointing, supervisory, and controlling pow-

ers committed to them and imposed; and Paul gives minute and specific instructions to what ends and how these powers should be employed and applied.

This providential and lucid development may fairly be taken as a key to the general economy set up by the Apostles over the entire field of their labours; and their several epistles, together with the book of Acts, are replete with indications and proofs confirmative of this theory. The theory sheds light upon the records, and the records illustrate and establish the theory.

When we take up a theory of ministerial organization fairly deduced from historical research back to the personal ministry of the Apostles, and find abundant historical developments everywhere and in all ages of the same type; when, upon the closest examination, we find this theory is not inconsistent with the writings of the New Testament, but that it sheds light on them and receives light from them in return—each corroborative of each—and being satisfied, convinced, that the coincidence could not be accidental; it is impossible we should not feel, that we have arrived at something like certainty.

As to the definite *form*, or *forms* of this Episcopacy, Ecclesiastical history is not doubtful. Unnecessary and immense confusion has been thrown over and around this question, by an appeal to official and adventitious names, applied, in the Acts and Epistles, to the Christian ministry, and by not discriminating between them; as also by not taking hold of marked principles, as they are obviously and distinctly developed. Names are arbitrary and accidental, and change with time and events. The names worn by the Apostles and by the ministry which they appointed are at one time official, as Bishop, Presbyter, Elder, Deacon, &c.; at another declarative of some specific employments, or acts, or classes of acts, as Evangelist, teacher, &c.; at another they express some specific relation, as minister, pastor, &c.; at another they are metaphorical, as Angel, Ambassador, Prophet, &c. The highest name of all is Apostle, which is *official*, as it involves a commission, and *relative* to its authority and its object. This name is sometimes ap-

plied to others besides the Apostles, in its simple etymological sense, or metaphorically; at others, officially to their associates, who were added to the original class. Some of the official names are applied interchangeably to the same official agents, where the greater involves the less, as; "The elders who are among you I exhort, who am also an elder." 1 Pet. v. 1. The Apostles were all bishops, presbyters, and elders. Official names are also applied interchangeably, to denote the same office, as presbyter, elder, &c.

It is impossible, therefore, to reason with any absolute certainty, on the question under consideration, from the accidental application of names. The specific cases, circumstances, and manifest object must all be taken into consideration. An emperor may mean a general in the Roman army; or the chief magistrate of a nation in ancient or modern times. A consul may mean the head of the French Republic, or a mere commercial agent. A governor may be over a province, or a state, or a hospital, or a jail. Our own ministers of religion of the same grade are called interchangeably pastors, teachers, domines, elders, parsons, priests, missionaries, &c. These names are official, or declarative of employment, or metaphorical, or popular—and all arbitrary and accidental. Unless, therefore, we bring names in such applications down to the history, the times, the circumstances, the subjects, and the objects, we are all at sea. Disregarding such reasons for discrimination, one might bring together the various names applied to the Apostles and their fellow-labourers, and make "confusion worse confounded." But regarding these considerations with a proper discrimination, there is little or no difficulty in determining their meaning, official or otherwise; and when they are official, the specific nature and grade of office may also be determined.

That the ministry of the Apostles in their own persons was an Episcopacy, cannot be denied; that the ministry, which they appointed, was an Episcopacy, seems very satisfactorily indicated; and that the ministry, which they designed should continue in the church,

was after this model, is so evident, that it seems impossible not to believe it, when all preconceived opinion and prejudice are laid aside. Any other conclusion seems a violence alike to presumption, to scriptural developments, and to history. Who can establish the negative against such notices? Who, with such indications, can resist the bearing and weight of probability in this specific direction, not to speak of positive evidence?

That the Episcopacy appointed by the Apostles was exactly of the same type, as that which now prevails, can hardly be considered material, so long as the difference is so small, as not to be appreciable. That the grades of the ministry should stand under different names, is of no consequence, provided the principle be maintained. No certain and conclusive argument can be based upon the arbitrary and accidental change of names—except as sometimes it may satisfactorily be shown, that it has been done for public reasons and public convenience. For example: It is impossible not to have respect for that feeling of the first age, which left the Apostles in their own distinctive and high pre-eminence, and appropriated the term *bishop* to the highest office of the Christian ministry, when before it had been interchangeably applied to the second grade. The *order* existed as appointed by the Apostles, and for public convenience it must needs have a name of exclusive and permanent application. It was therefore adopted and assigned to this place—arbitrary and accidental at first, but ever after fixed and well understood.

The application of *priest* to the second order, was an early, but yet an arbitrary usage. *Presbyter* is more appropriate and primitive; and *elder* would have been equally so. *Deacon* is right and primitive; although it is conceded, I believe, by Episcopalians themselves, at least by some, that the office of a deacon, as now exercised, is accommodated in some measure to a different state of society, and to the more convenient uses of the ministry in present circumstances; but without violation of primitive and distinctive principles. So long as origi-

nal principles are preserved, public convenience, in any new combination of society, may be safely consulted.

My object in this chapter, as declared in the outset, has rather been to *suggest* the argument for Episcopacy in a comprehensive statement, than to arrange it in detail; and to expose briefly the method and course of my own reasoning on the subject. Those who may have leisure, and who may desire to prosecute the inquiry, are already referred to some of the best authorities.

The serious and conscientious inquirer, entertaining proper respect for the wisdom and power of the Head of the Church, must, as I think, carry along with him, in all his investigations on this subject, the fundamental axiom I have referred to, viz. That a *definite* ministry must have been appointed in the beginning, and must be sustained throughout all time—a ministry that can be found, seen, known, beyond any reasonable doubt. To such a mind the position can be hardly satisfactory, that the *model* of the ministry can be of no consequence; that it may be one thing in one age and country, and diverse in all others, each from each. Such an hypothesis could not be creditable to the wisdom, nor demonstrative of the power of the Author of Christianity, because we unavoidably feel, that such looseness—such want of plan, of system—must necessarily embarrass and confound the operations of such an enterprise, in such a world as this, and in view of the nature of man as a social, but fallen, erring being. It is virtually an impeachment of Divine wisdom. Those very considerations, which make a Divine Revelation necessary, require that one part of it should determine the *form*—the *mode* of that ministry, which is ordained the leading and grand instrumental agency to accomplish the objects of that Revelation; and so to determine it, that it can be ascertained by comparing the lights of the record with the lights of Providence. Though the last, viz. the lights of Providence, *alias* of history, have been so often and so emphatically eschewed, as having no legitimate place among the materials of investigation, yet are they as indispensable as the record. They are both from the same high authority. It is remarkable,

that this principle of interpretation is recognised and laid down by Revelation itself: "No prophecy is its *own* interpreter." It requires the lights of history.

In the instance under consideration, there is history enough in the record itself satisfactorily to determine the question; nevertheless, the lights of subsequent history are fairly and properly applied to it. Our axiom asserts, that the Head of the Church cannot have been disappointed in his plan, and we may expect to find all along in the track of his providence the ministry of his own appointment; and of course the *model* of that ministry. This axiom can by no means be set down as an assumption. It is a vital principle, revealed, and in form declared: "On this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It is a principle, that pervades God's providential government of the world. If the Christian ministry, in its own proper form, has at any time ceased from the earth—been lost —or essentially vitiated, then, as it seems to me, has the promise, purpose, and plan of God failed; forasmuch as a perpetuity of the ministry is essential to the perpetuity of the church.

I have been surprised to find how much of *assumption* is required to oppose the claims of Episcopacy. I beg leave to introduce here the following list of such assumptions from Bishop Onderdonk's "Episcopacy tested by Scripture":—

"Parity (the claim to equality of rank in the Christian ministry) never can prove, but always *takes for granted* one or more of the following points: 1. That because the name 'Bishop' is applied in Scripture to the sacred order of the ministry, there is no higher order there mentioned. 2. That the transaction in Acts xiii. 2–3, was the ordination of Barnabus and Saul. 3. That the word 'Presbytery' means not an office, but a body of elders; and 4. Of elders strictly, without an Apostle; or 5. If an Apostle was with them, that he had no more ordaining power than they. 6. That Evangelists, as such, had supreme power over new churches and their clergy. 7. That no individuals but the proper (original)

Apostles had such (apostolic) authority over churches and their clergy after their affairs were settled. 8. That the Epistles to Timothy were meant for all the clergy in Ephesus. 9. That Timothy had supreme authority in Ephesus only as an Evangelist, not as an Apostle, or such a successor of the Apostles, as was afterward called a bishop. 10. That Titus was an Evangelist. 11. That each of the seven churches of Asia consisted of but one congregation. 12. That the 'Angels' were but pastors of single congregations. 13. That they were but moderators of bodies of presbyters, &c. &c. Some of these points are always *taken for granted* in the anti-episcopal argument intended to rest on the basis of Scripture. We deny them *all*, and aver that Scripture furnishes *no* evidence, less or greater, direct or indirect, towards substantiating them."

If any persons should desire to see how the bishop has supported this denial, and managed other parts of the argument from Scripture, they are respectfully referred to the Tract itself, which may be had separately, or be found in "Episcopacy Examined and Re-examined," which also contains the Rev. Mr. Barnes's reply, &c.

In this connexion the economy of the Levitical priesthood is not to be overlooked. The form and ordering thereof may fairly be regarded as a *pattern* of a ministry devised by God himself, suited to the nature of man and to the condition of human society. There we find different orders, and specific rules are given to determine and fix them. With this pattern in their eye the Apostles set up Christianity and appointed its ministry. Can it be supposed they paid no respect to it? If indeed it was founded in nature, in propriety, in public convenience, and for public good, so far as the point now under consideration is concerned, would the Holy Spirit, which ordered the first and presided over the last, be likely to constitute the second totally unlike the former? Can it be imagined, that the principle of organization, that pervaded the Levitical priesthood, was one of the things ordained to expire with the Levitical rites of cere-

mony, sacrifice, &c.? and that the formation of the Christian ministry should have no respect to that model? Presumption, probability must, I think, be allowed to have some force in this reference; and not a little. It is not without reason, that the Papal Church has had regard to the Levitical plan in the constitution and appointed rites of her priesthood. But in this, as in all things else, she has gone to an extreme.

As subsequent history sheds light on the Apostolic age and writings in relieving this question from embarrassment, so does the light of previous arrangements contribute its aid to this point. If it may be taken for granted, that the Christian Sabbath takes the place of the Jewish; that baptism is a substitute for circumcision, &c. &c. then may it also be taken for granted, that the Christian ministry comes directly in the place of the Levitical priesthood, as between God and the people; and that the Apostles would of course regard that model in the new arrangement committed to their charge. If left to their own discretion, it is morally certain they would have done it; and it is scarcely less probable, that the Holy Spirit should have so directed them.

Validity and invalidity of ordination.

It is natural in this discussion, that the mind should recur to this topic; it is unavoidable. I may possibly, in the minds of some, do myself discredit by the confession, that my former composure on this subject, or contentment with the ordination I had received, resulted, so far as I know myself, from the following influences. 1. Education. This, as every one knows, has great power, and is not easily disturbed. To be driven from the ground, that one has been educated upon, in a matter of so great moment, will doubtless be ascribed by some to a want of firmness. It may, however, be done in singleness of mind, and under the calmest deliberation. But why did he not inform himself before? Answer: He was not so *educated*. A truism? Nevertheless, I think the answer will be appreciated. 2. I found myself in a great deal

of good company. The many about us, as we commonly think, are more likely to be right; especially, if there are great names in our society, it is very satisfactory. Who can declare himself uninfluenced by authority? 3. It was not convenient to change. But that is not honest. Yes, it may be perfectly so. Education, connexions, position in society, influential authority, &c. constitute convenience in such a matter; and all these may so operate on the mind, as to satisfy the conscience, while in fact convenience is the governing law. 4. When my mind developed tendencies towards being disturbed on this question, I generally quieted myself in a resort always at hand for the exigency, viz. There is no historical certainty, and one may as well go on where he is. I am inclined to think, that this last reason is extensively prevalent, and very influential. When so much can be said on both sides, one seems to have a very good apology for occupying ground that is most convenient. 5. I do not think it is morally possible, in the ordinary circumstances of those, on whom it is more particularly incumbent to examine this question, to do it with perfect candour—unbiased. They are influenced in a way and by causes, which they cannot help, and that in perfect consistency with uprightness. It is only by a change of position very considerable, that a mind can be thoroughly redeemed from such influences. 6. The position of a Presbyterian and Congregationalist on this question, in rejecting and opposing the claims of Episcopacy, and the materials of argument on which he principally relies, very naturally lead him to depreciate the idea and theory of *consecration*, not only as respects sacred edifices, &c., but as respects the sacred office. In his theory, if the office is influential, that is the principal thing. I am inclined to think, that with most of these two classes of persons, and with others interested on the same side of the question, uninterrupted descent of the sacred office, is not regarded as indispensably important. I have shown in another place, that the Congregationalists or Independents of England reject the idea of consecration altogether; and I have reason to

suppose there is a great deal of sympathy with this theory among those in America, who reject the claims of Episcopacy. I once heard a sermon to establish this point, from a Presbyterian of high rank, who is now president of a college. I am sure I have myself been influenced not a little by this leaven. Where this idea prevails, the claims of Episcopacy are of course lightly esteemed.

But a very great change of my own position in society at last left me open to re-examine this question uninfluenced by any strong bias ; and other considerations, before recognised, have led me to it. The result of the whole has been a satisfactory and full conviction, that the Head of the Church by his Apostles set up an Episcopal economy over his visible kingdom, of a plural number of ministerial grades ; that he designed it to be perpetual ; and that he has secured its perpetuity. I feel obliged, moreover, to believe, as an indispensable element of the system, without which the fabric would be dissolved, that the ministry must perpetuate itself.

I am satisfied, that the Apostles adopted associates and appointed successors to themselves of their own standing and grade, as to the proper ministerial office—leaving out of view of course their extemporaneous and peculiar prerogatives—and that it is the appropriate business of these successors of the Apostles to perpetuate the ministry, that was left in their hands. I believe, because I find, that since the days of the Apostles, this supreme grade has been known under the name of bishops ; and in this office I recognise the Apostolic trust. With these views, it was impossible that I should remain in my former connexion.

What will be the Result of the Discussion of this question in the Christion World ?

A curious suggestion, rather than useful, perhaps ; and it would seem moreover to be trespassing on the ground of prophecy. With those, who feel obliged to yield to the claims of Episcopacy, as an economy set up by the Apos-

tles, and carrying with it the obligations of authority, it cannot but be a subject of regret, that Martin Luther, John Calvin, and their associates; and afterward, John Knox and his followers, should have departed from it. It is sufficiently evident, that they all felt it to be a bold step; that they had their misgivings, John Knox, perhaps, excepted, who in this particular did justice to the character of his country. "The exigence of necessity" pressed harder upon him, than upon the Continental reformers, who for such a reason thought themselves warranted in sacrificing Episcopacy. But, although it does appear, that they were all of them well absorbed in carrying on their great work, and from the violence arrayed against and brought to bear upon them, might be excused for looking with disrespect upon pretensions which came armed with such tremendous power, yet, it does not satisfactorily appear, that Episcopacy might not have been obtained either from the Roman, or Greek, or Bohemian Church. But whirled onward by the giddy and impassioned spirit of the age, and by the absorbing necessities of their great enterprise, this question seems not to have received all that serious consideration, which its importance claimed; and having once made the leap, they and their descendants have been compelled to justify it.

But the progress of three centuries has superinduced more temperate thinking and cooler reasoning. For all of good, which the Reformation has brought with it on society—on the world—we "thank God and take courage." It is impossible to appreciate too highly that emancipation of mind—that stage of advancement in religion and civil society; at the same time it cannot be denied, that the Reformation had its faults. It was human. The vices of the age had their seat too deep and firm in the elementary combinations of the social fabric to be all eradicated in a moment and by a single effort. The effort itself, in such a tempest of human passion, was liable to abuse, and to induce evils; and nothing but the infallible guidance of inspired men was competent, in such a violent change, to avert and bar

them. Along with the evils, that remained, some of which were induced, Episcopacy to a great extent, was sacrificed. With my present views I may be allowed to assume this, although I do not claim to impose it; and I think it will generally be granted, that the sacrifice was an evil, inasmuch as it might have been retained in those Reformed churches which now reject it, under the same general ecclesiastical economy and modes of worship, which now prevail among them. For Episcopacy, it should be kept in mind, has no necessary connexion with a Liturgy, or any particular modes of worship. These accidents are matters of taste, preference, and expediency, to be determined by the parties who adopt and use more or less of them, as their wisdom or choice may approve.

Suppose, that all the branches of the Protestant Reformed church had retained Episcopacy with all the other varieties as they now exist: this great question would then have been for ever at rest. Would it not have been a blessing? The principle of Episcopacy must obtain; the religious world cannot do without it; it is essential in society for the management of religious enterprises on any extended scale. I have shown, that it now pervades and governs the American religious world throughout. It is even astonishing with what rapidity it has come over the land. It is the result of necessity in all such great religious efforts, associated and combined, as have characterized this country for a few years past.

In view of the position which we now occupy in relation to the past and future—the workings of the religious elements in our own land—and of that free and independent thinking which characterizes the public mind, which withal must have its influence in our public schools and theological seminaries—if indeed, there be any strong claims in Episcopacy, it cannot be matter of surprise, that it should soon obtain a respect even in this country, which it has not heretofore realized. There are at present two very influential considerations, which may lawfully constitute a ground for such an anticipation: One is, that the religious extravagances of the country will

naturally drive the more sober part of the community to this resort for protection. The other is, upon the premises here occupied, viz. that Episcopacy has strong claims to respect, sober inquiry, candid investigation, and temperate discussion, will bring doubts over the minds of numerous candidates for the Christian ministry, as to the validity of other orders, and compel them in obedience to conscience to resolve those doubts by adopting the only alternative, that lies before them. The question in their minds will be reduced to this :—Other ordination is uncertain—unsatisfactory ; this is allowed by all to be valid ; it has a respect in the conscience, and a currency in the opinion of all mankind. Let us, therefore, adopt that, concerning which there is no doubt.

There is yet another reason, which can hardly fail to have its influence with candidates for the ministry, when it comes to be duly weighed—a reason, which, it must be confessed, does not rest in Episcopacy apart from its accidents ; but which in our country, and for the most part elsewhere, is known to be allied to it. I mean the excellence and convenience of the public and authorized ritual of the Episcopal Church. The use of this, always the same and always orthodox, will be found upon reflection to constitute a facility most essential to the convenience and efficiency of the ministry. The experience of all ministers, who have been accustomed to do without this help, will abundantly certify, that all those services which this ritual comprehends and supplies, customarily make a most exorbitant and exhausting demand upon their intellectual resources and physical powers. To sustain these parts well, independent of a Liturgy, requires an ability which few men possess. In the use of this ritual, it is only necessary, that the officiating minister should carry into his pulpit a proper and a devout state of feeling. His intellect is not tasked for these services ; but all his strength, in that particular, may be reserved for his sermon—for that exercise, the more specific design of which is to bring sinners to repentance, and to allure onward towards heaven the hosts of God's elect, by inciting them to active obedience on

earth. While the Liturgy prepares the mind, the sermon should have a power in it to give the impulse.

As a matter of needful economy in the public offices of the ministry, the help of the ritual is most important. For the want of this there is at this moment a greater waste of health and life in the ministry of this country, than can be estimated. I heed not the charge of laziness, coming up from the fens and bogs of uncharitableness—from those unsympathizing hearts, which would rather exult and sing, than shed a tear, over the premature grave of a minister of Jesus Christ, leaving upon the sod that covers him this cruel praise and long stereotyped cant—"that it is better to wear out, than rust out." There is no time—no room for laziness in the ranks of the Christian ministry, in this age and in this land. The great question is—how shall they be saved from becoming victims to the incessant and overwhelming demands for their private and public labours; and how shall the little power, which God has given them, be most economically and efficiently employed? A public ritual, generally introduced, would unquestionably be a most essential relief; besides, that it would furnish a most important facility in the hands of ministers to check and control those powerful tendencies to extravagance, which are so characteristic of our religious world.

The prejudices against liturgical services, that have prevailed so extensively, are unreasonable—unphilosophical,—and it is pleasing to observe, that the public mind, which to a great extent and for ages has been lodged in the extreme of doing without any liturgical form of worship, is coming back to a more wholesome state. It is remarkable, that within a few years not a little of the talent of the most eminent private Christians and ministers, both in England and America, and of many too who are connected with denominations that reject public liturgies altogether, has been employed in preparing and publishing devotional compositions for the closet, for the family, and more or less for public use. And this work is still going on; it is patronised; and the fact proves the tendencies of the public mind. Good sense will sooner or later prevail over unreasonable prejudice.

CHAPTER V.

The new and extraordinary religious state of the country.

Monsieur J. H. Merle D'Aubigné, President of the Theological seminary at Geneva, delivered a discourse at the commencement of the annual session, May 1st, 1834, entitled, *The invariableness of the doctrines of Christianity, amid the diversity of its forms—The voice of the Church one and the same in all ages.** It is a highly and purely philosophical treatise. I trust I may say *philosophical*, without doing prejudice to it. That it is the work of a Christian of high rank for piety and talents, and the advocate of orthodoxy against rationalism at Geneva, his relation to that seminary and the tract itself declare. M. D'Aubigné sets forth in this production four grand *developments* of Christianity, which he denominates—the form of Life; the form of Doctrine; the form of the School; and the form of the Reformation. By form M. D'Aubigné evidently means *development*.

The first form, or development, which he calls *the form of Life*, comprehends the period from the Apostles onward from two to three centuries—where, as he supposes, and not without reason, we find a marked and impressive development of the *vitality* of Christianity. The second form, or development, he denominates *the form of Doctrine*, beginning with the early part of the fourth century, and running on to the middle of the eleventh; during which period, especially in the former part of it, the great and fundamental doctrines of Christianity were thoroughly discussed and settled in the form of authorized creeds, and other literary productions of eminent individual authorities, under the sanction of the

* See Literary and Theological Review for December, 1835.

greatest names in the history of the church. Then comes *the form of the School* (*schola*), the grand characteristic of which was an effort to reduce the doctrines of Christianity to *system*—which succeeded, and thus constituted a new development. This began in the eleventh century. And next comes *the form, or development, of the Reformation.*

Of course, as might be expected in such a philosophical treatise, M. D'Aubigné discerned numberless minor developments in each of these grand forms—each and all of which had their specific character, importance, and influence, and which it was impossible, within the limits prescribed to him, to bring under review. The chief interest of this effort lies in a demonstration (showing) of a *providential consistency*, which declares uniformity of doctrine and design, supported through all ages of the church; or in his own language, *the invariableness of the doctrines of Christianity in the midst of the diversity of its forms.* He shows, that Christianity is the same always; that the progress of its history has been its providential development; that it has not been impaired, but gradually opened; and that the Reformation of the sixteenth century restored, combined, and united its capital elements of *vitality and doctrine systematized.* "The Reformation," says M. D'Aubigné, "took the form of *system*, and carried it back upon the form of *doctrine.* Then it carried back these two forms united upon the form of *life.* Or rather, it proceeded in an inverted order. It started with *life*, led it forward into *doctrine*, and crowned the whole with *system.* The Reformation united the three sorts of culture which preceded it."

This theory, thus adduced from history, leads him to a modest conjecture in regard to the future: "A *fifth* period, or form, has now commenced in the church, mysterious, unknown, whose peculiar characteristics it is not yet given us to discern. But . . . . . the fundamental truths, which we have passed in review, will also constitute the essence and glory of the future form (development). . . . . God suffers nothing to be lost in his church. . . . . The church can no

more divest herself of the influence of the successive forms, through which she has passed, than a tree can divest itself of the layers, which every spring adds to it; or the body of a full-grown man of its annual increments. . . . . The past will live again in the future. Life, doctrine, system—all will be found united in the new form. But will there not be something to give it a peculiar character, and thus to distinguish it from the form (development) of the Reformation? Doubtless there will; but this something is yet to come—and who shall describe it? Nevertheless, I will hazard a *conjecture.* Will not the peculiar feature of the new form (development) be a universal activity in extending to every race of men, and to every man of every race, what the preceding forms have produced? Has not the period of the Reformation united all the isolated excellences of the first three, that the new period (now opening on the world) may lay its hand upon them, and spread them abroad among mankind? Must not *life*, *doctrine*, *system*, or rather *Christian science* become the property of our race, as they have never been hitherto? I am silent on these things, which are still concealed from our view by a dark veil."

And where is the pertinence of this far-fetched theory to the purpose announced? Let it not, however, be branded with the name of theory, as if it were an hypothesis. It will be seen how it grows out of history, and is based upon it. But, of its pertinency in this place :—

I beg leave, then, to say, that of the new form, or development, of Christianity, now opening on the world, the history of religion in the United States of America must be allowed to constitute a very essential and important feature. Moreover, this very development on this grand scale hath its own *minor* developments, in which American Christians are all practically concerned. They have been passing before the eyes of the world ever since the first settlement of this country by our European ancestors, and they are still opening and passing in rapid succession.

Unquestionably, we, Americans, are the most religious

people in the world. That is, religion, as an element of society, has more energy among us, than with any other people. The Papists, indeed, have more of the externals, of the paraphernalia of religion; but religion with them is for the most part a passive principle, acted upon by their immense and complicated machinery. With most of European Protestants, religion still lies buried in heaps of rubbish, from which it has never yet been able thoroughly to disengage itself. In Great Britain it has more purity and more energy than on the Continent—far more—and it is fast reviving and recovering its primitive vitality, under all the advantages of well-digested doctrine and settled system. But with us religion is still more vital; it is more pure; it is charged with far greater energy in and over the moral elements of the community. "The way of the Lord is here prepared." As in the construction and arrangement of our political and civil fabric we had the power of rejecting the vices inherent in the institutions of the Old World, and by the favour of Providence have in a great measure succeeded; so have we been able to reject the vices of their religious systems, and to gain an advancement on the rest of the Christian world in this particular, which, if discreetly used by us, bids fair to give us the lead in that grand development of Christianity, which, in the theory of Monsieur D'Aubigné, is supposed to be now in progress.

Let us, then, for a moment review the religious history of this country, that we may observe our own career, find what we now are, and whether, indeed, there be anything in the present state of religion among us *new* and *extraordinary*—enough to warrant the heading of this chapter as a leading topic.

It is manifest at a glance, that Christianity in this country has developed a greater degree of vitality—that it has been more energetic in its influences—than in any other part of the Christian world for the time being. Those events, (developments, if you please, or as a class making one grand development,) commonly called *revivals of religion*, which have characterized the religious

history of this country from the beginning, cannot be overlooked in this place. They are to the point of our present inquiry, and demonstrate a religious susceptibility in the people of this land, which has never elsewhere been so strikingly developed in any age or country, if we except the Apostolic period; and the features of our own history and of that exhibit all that diversity, which might be expected in the light of M. D'Aubigné's theory, admitting it to be well founded. Under the ministry of the Apostles there was exhibited all the genuine vitality of Christianity, without that doctrine and system, as a general character of the public mind, which now prevails. I mean only, what everybody will admit, that it was not possible for primitive Christians to be so well informed, as is in the power of Christians of these days, and as is generally the fact in such a country as ours, and in Great Britain.

It has been made evident to all the world, that the developments of religious susceptibility in the public mind of this country have been extraordinary. Let it not be supposed for a moment, that in pursuing this train of reasoning, I leave out of view the Divine economy of Christianity in any of its peculiar features and appointed agencies; that I overlook its adaptation to the moral nature of man, as devised by infinite wisdom; that I disregard the use of divinely appointed means; or that I forget, that the Holy Spirit of God is the author of all pure religious affections in the heart of man. All these and other leading, fundamental, and cardinal doctrines of Christianity are assumed—taken for granted. I speak now only as a Christian philosopher, investigating those adventitious conditions of society, which as means or as obstacles make Christianity more or less energetic in one age and in one country, than in others. It is false to assume, that there is no philosophy in the developments of religion.

The economy of Christianity is fixed by God himself, and unalterable. But the conditions of society, where it is introduced, are adventitious and variable. Hence the effects of Christianity are variable, from the very

fact, that its economy is ever the same, and society not the same. And all this variableness is a proper subject of philosophical investigation. No inquiry can be more suitable, or more practically important for Christians. It is solely under the influence of such considerations, that I venture upon this ground. It is not forbidden—but a duty; it is the way to obtain that light, which, as Christians, we need to qualify us for the service of our Divine Master. As Christians we need to understand the state of society, in which we live; and in the way to that, we are compelled to review and investigate the stages and modes of its progress to any given period —to our own time.

It is a matter of history, then, that the moral elements of the people of this land have proved peculiarly and in a high degree susceptible of being influenced by religion —by Christianity. Religious excitements, called revivals of religion, have been a prominent feature in the history of this country from its earliest periods—more particularly within a hundred years; and the agency of man has always had more or less to do in their management, or in their origination, or in both. Formerly in theory—for man is naturally a philosopher, and will always have his theory for every event and every fact—they were regarded as Pentecostal seasons—as showers from heaven—with which this world below had nothing to do, but to receive and be refreshed by them, as they came. Such was the theory of ministers and of Christians generally in the days of President Edwards; such was the prevailing impression for a long time subsequent; and such for the most part has it ever been, till within a few years past. Prayer and a general preparation of mind in Christian communities, as a passive condition, involving active and earnest desires, were always considered important. But direct and general efforts of a more positive kind, especially as reduced to a system, I believe, were rarely if ever undertaken till of late years. It is impossible not to feel a respect for such states of the public mind, accounts of which have been given by President Edwards and others. A whole community, or the

great majority of them, absorbed in serious thoughts about eternal things, inquiring the way to heaven, and seeming intent on the attainment of that high and glorious condition, presents a spectacle, as solemn as it is interesting to contemplate. Such, doubtless, has been the condition of many communities in the early and later history of American revivals; and it is no less true, that the fruits have been the turning of many to God and his ways.

But while we pay our unqualified respect to these manifest outpourings of the Divine Spirit, when men looked on and felt and believed, that they were indeed of this character; such as have been experienced in this land for nearly a century, been welcomed by the complacency and the holiest sympathies of our most eminent divines, and managed under God by their discreet and anxious culture; such as have been an honour to religion, commanded the respect of the world, and been the means of turning thousands from the error of their ways to God and his Christ; such as have confirmed the relation of pastor and people, and bound them together by stronger ties; such as have promoted the general interests of piety and pure morality among the people, and given greater efficiency to the exemplary and zealous efforts of a regular ministry;—approving these, as in all good conscience a Christian can hardly fail to do, it is impossible not to look with some distrust and anxiety on a new order of religious excitements, which, for a few years past, has been gradually taking the place of the class above referred to, pervading the country to no inconsiderable extent, conducted and managed principally by itinerating ministers, who have no permanent connexions with society, whose influence has rather disturbed and broken up the old and wholesome relation of pastor and people, created a wide spread and insatiate appetite for religious novelties, and brought about a general instability in the character of our religious world.

So great has been the respect of the Christian public of this land for revivals of religion, that it was a long time before the regular ministry—who had been obliged

to see their parishes invaded by these itinerant men, for the declared purpose of producing religious excitements, called revivals—dared to bring in question the propriety or usefulness of these proceedings. It was sufficiently evident to all sober and discreet ministers, whose piety, Christian zeal, and pastoral character could in no respect be impeached, that these revivals, so called, had begun to assume an entire new character, which they could not approve, and which awakened their anxiety. The theory of revivals, from being *dependant on Divine influence*, which was the universal belief in their earlier history, both among ministers and private Christians, had in the minds and preaching of these men been reversed, and was boldly and publicly affirmed, to be *dependant on man;* and that a revival might be had at any time *at the will of Christians*, in any given community—depending, of course, on a specific set of measures invented and applied for this purpose under their direction and control.

It is important to be observed, that the theory of revivals, as developed in the minds of these men, has undergone this essential modification—this entire change. I say theory—for such undoubtedly it is. The uniform course pursued and the measures applied prove it to be a theory ; and a theory well understood. In any case it is a theory. The simple preaching of Divine truth to awaken religious attention, in the old way, is a theory, and a legitimate, scriptural one. But in the case now under consideration the theory involves a new and specific moral machinery, or system of measures, to be employed and applied in connexion with the most startling and terrific appeals to the feelings and passions. The acme of the contrivance has been to shock the mind and drive it from the position and basis, on which education and habit had fixed and established it. The theory assumes, that no religious training can be good and right—that all is wrong—so long as the sinner remains unconverted. To dislodge him, therefore, by whatever means, entirely from his accustomed position, from all his habits of thinking, at whatever anxious and conscientious pains they may have been acquired and established under the

best religious guardians and teachers, and to bring his mind under the influence and control of this new moral machinery, is conversion. This is the theory, and substantially the mode of its application.

They who have philosophized so skilfully in the construction of this theory and in the application of this machinery, must excuse us, if we in turn philosophize in analyzing and exposing it. That theory of morals or religion, which will not endure scrutiny, may justly be suspected as unsound. They who have introduced an entirely new system of religious operations, who have unsettled the public mind, who have disturbed the pastoral relations of the country, and in a multitude of instances entirely broken them up, must have an uncommon degree of assurance, if they could expect to assert and enjoy this right, without having it questioned. The crisis has doubtless arrived, when it will be questioned; it has already been questioned; and the regular ministry of the country, having long suffered the most grievous ills by these incursions, have at last begun to manifest their sense of duty to the public, to conscience, and to God, by betraying or openly declaring their dissent from, their aversion to, and their abhorrence of these practices. This dissent, this aversion, this abhorrence has been tardy in manifesting itself, because of a conscientious reluctance which all friends of pure and genuine revivals have felt to oppose anything passing under this name; and in the hope, that these extravagances might be arrested, and the cause of religion redeemed from their blighting influence. The forestalling of these events, which has for several years betrayed itself in superior and discerning minds, feeling the responsibility of their high and influential trust as ministers of religion; the more open expressions of opinion, which have come from the most respectable quarters, in public discussions on this question, and through the medium of the press; the gradual withdrawal of confidence, which had been unadvisedly and with the purest intentions bestowed; and the uninterrupted developments of the religious journals, abundantly demonstrate the prevalent and growing impres-

sions of this new, extraordinary, and unhappy state of our religious world. It is at last found out, that this leaven is so widely diffused through the mass of the community, that nearly all religious excitements, wherever they occur, are corrupted by it; it is next to impossible to have and enjoy a revived state of religious feeling in any church and congregation without encountering it.

The causes of this remarkable state of things are to my mind sufficiently manifest. First, that grand development or form of Christianity, in the public mind of this country, which has providentially made us, as a people, more susceptible of the energetic influences of religious truth than any Christian nation, has afforded wonderful facilities to the most active religious agencies of whatever kind, that have been brought to bear on the mass of the community. From the beginning of our history and in the structure of our society we have been peculiarly open to sudden irruptions of religious zeal from ignorant and inexperienced persons, and from wild enthusiasts. The early history of Massachusetts proves it; Trumbull's History of Connecticut lays open the same general fact; and later events, over a wider field, confirm it. And lastly, if I may be permitted the suggestion, our defective religious and ecclesiastical organizations have ministered to this result. We have had nothing of this kind, generally adopted, and sufficiently well provided, compact, and firm, to protect and defend us from these irruptions, or to check and restrain these tendencies. A woman could disturb a church, and a man could overthrow it; a bad and viciously disposed minister could bid defiance to his brethren, and lay waste religious societies for want of authority to arrest his career; orthodoxy has been exposed for want of a common and generally received creed; and the best and most useful pastors of the land have had their influence destroyed and been broken up by the lawless and rude incursions of those, who are also clothed with the ministerial office and of the same denomination, because there was none that could forbid it. The influences, which govern the

religious world, more generally come up from the lower conditions of life and from the ladies, instead of originating in official stations, whence they ought to proceed from the very design of society and by the ordinance of God. In such a state of things it need not seem strange, that the sacred cause of religious revivals should have been so extensively blighted by the rash experiments of bold and adventurous spirits, relying on the philosophy of a human theory, rather than on the power of the Spirit of God—inventing and applying machinery of their own, instead of using the legitimate means of Christianity.

But lest I should seem not to pay suitable respect to the *fruits* of these operations, which, it is averred, are often good, and that there is reason to believe, that numerous souls are born again through this instrumentality, it may seem incumbent upon me to meet this justification. For this I am fully prepared by the experience I have had and the observation I have made.

I will admit, then, that souls are regenerated and brought into a spiritual union with Christ by this instrumentality; that scores, even hundreds are; or any number that may be claimed by those who advocate this system, be it more or less; and even on that ground I can see abundant reasons for anxiety and regret, that such a system—such modes of operation have prevailed, or ever been introduced in our religious world:—

Because I am reasonably convinced, by the widest scope of this question, and by all the relations and bearings of these practices, that they are in the way of the spiritual regeneration and salvation of the greater number of souls. Of course I allude to that system of operations, which contrives to get up in any given community the greatest possible religious excitement; which sets out on the principle, that it is possible to accomplish this object in the execution of a specific plan; which goes to work with this view; which, in instances too many to be a subject of conjecture as to their number, has been known to succeed; which has a distinct theory by which

to control and dictate its measures; and which, in its progress, is characterized by great violence.

First, by violence to customary modes of religious operation. However pure, good, and unexceptionable they may have been, it sets them almost entirely aside, and introduces a new system, on the principle, that *novelty* is an essential element of this moral machinery. It is perfectly philosophical for the end in view. It contrives to take the public mind by surprise, and thus gains an opportunity to descend upon it in an overwhelming manner. Every stage of progress is studied and arranged philosophically, by considering what man is individually and socially, how he is likely to be affected by a given treatment applied to his mind and feelings, as a religious and accountable being. All the preaching, addresses, warnings, entreaties, exhortations, prayers—the time, place, number, and continuous succession of all meetings—are studiously contrived and applied to the great end—excitement. The greater the excitement, the better. And when the object of excitement is gained—when public sympathy is sufficiently roused—the most violent measures are employed to urge and press persons to the state of conversion. Great violence is done to ordinary habits of thinking and feeling, though they may be indifferent or even approvable as to their character. No matter how good and thorough the Christian education of the subjects of this influence may have been, yet they must be startled—shocked; they must be invaded by some new and unexpected access to their imaginations, fears, hopes, passions;—in short, their minds must be entirely dislodged from accustomed positions and from all former ground, however good and proper it may have been, and they must be *compelled*, in a moment of the greatest possible excitement, to yield themselves entirely—their intellect, their reason, their imagination, their belief, their feelings, their passions, their whole souls—to a single and new position, that is prescribed to them.

Now, I do not deny, that in many—nor do I feel any interest in denying, that in most—of these instances, the individuals thus *subdued*, as it is commonly called, have

really been subdued to God; that they are genuine converts. But after granting this, which is all that can be claimed by anybody, I must be permitted to express my distinct and deep conviction, that the *mode* of accomplishing this object is ever afterward injurious to these very minds; injurious to society religiously considered; and an obstacle in the way of the conversion and salvation of the greatest number of souls.

It is injurious to these minds. Granting, that their *hearts* have been subdued to God, it is no less true, in most instances, that their *minds*, their reasoning powers, have been *broken down* by man. The intellect has received a shock by this extraordinary and violent treatment, which cannot easly be repaired. It is the very plan of this onset to *subject* the mind as well as the heart. The theory of conversion, with this class of reformers, comprehends this scope, and is not fulfilled, till this intellectual bondage is attained. A narrow circle of thinking and reasoning, in a few set and cant phrases, is prescribed to the converts, from which, if they ever venture to depart, they forfeit the proper character of Christians, and are considered as being actuated by abandonment of principle; or by a return to their old ways; or by conformity to the world. The mind, reduced to such a bondage, can never afterward be free—cannot be open to general cultivation and improvement. A false theory of Christian character is propounded and adopted; a false conscience is formed and nurtured; the intellect is enslaved; and the entire intellectual and moral character is vitiated, as compared with the highest and most desirable standard. A false theory of conversion is of course at the basis of all these defects: It is false in the minds of those who originate and manage these violent excitements; and false, as it becomes stereotyped in the minds of their converts. They allow nobody to be Christians, except by this rule. Whoever do not come into their way of thinking, and whose taste does not lead them to adopt the same cant phrases, when talking on the subject of religion, are no Christians. They can determine a person's Christian character at a glance, or by a word, or by an act, or by the want of some act.

Next, these violent excitements, and the violence that is carried into them, are injurious to society religiously considered. It is impossible, that the mind of a community should remain long in such a state of excitement. Aware of this, it is a uniform device of those who get them up and who supervise them, to make the most of them—to push them to the greatest extreme. They regard it as a harvest time. And just in proportion as the public mind has been overstrained, will be the reaction. It will not simply fall back to a sober position, where it was before being excited, but it will retire into the opposite extreme; and withal there will be left on it the pall of a morbid, painful, alarming indifference to religion. There will be a prevailing impression of the unhealthiness of the excitement, that is gone over, and a proportionate aversion ever to be acted on again in the same way.

And consequently, in the third place, it will prove an obstacle in the way of the conversion and salvation of the greater number of souls. "The harvest truly will be past, and the summer ended." The pale and sickly mantle of autumn will throw its folds over the community; and the chills, and frosts, and bands, and desolation of winter will succeed. Follow the train of these violent excitements, and see if it is not so. It is impossible it should be otherwise. The number of converts made by such violence—the general character of whom is far from being most desirable—though that number may seem to be great for the time, is no compensation for the sad effects left behind, and for the removal of all prospect and hope, that religion can again very soon be made to claim the attention of such a community. It is very reasonable to believe—it is difficult not to be convinced and fully satisfied—that, in view of the evils resulting from such a course to the minds of individuals and of the public, a uniform career of faithful preaching and pastoral labour, on a scale that can be steadily maintained and applied, without coldness on the one hand or intemperate and violent zeal on the other, would, in the long run, be the means of converting and saving many more souls, than by these fitful and violent convulsions, so marked with extravagance and blind zeal.

Let it not be supposed—no, not for a moment—that these remarks have any reference to those outpourings of the Spirit of God, which have been experienced by the religious congregations of this land in former periods; and which, I would fain hope, have not been altogether withdrawn. God forbid. But I refer exclusively to a system of measures of that specific character, which I have now been considering, so well known to have been recently and widely introduced into this country; which seems to be based upon a theory, that can dispense with Divine influence, and substitute the power of man; and which has so extensively changed the character and revolutionized the operations of the religion of this land. They are an entirely new state of things; they are, as seems to me, the work of man, and not of God. It may fairly be inferred from the spirit that is in them, and from the pretensions which they carry upon their face, that they *claim* to be the work of man. There is a broad phylactery on the forehead, a legible inscription on the front, of these enterprises: *It all depends on our will.* And it may easily be believed; it is sufficiently manifest.

The peculiar and quick religious susceptibilities of the people of this land have been tortured upon this rack. That grand and bright development of Christianity, so hopeful of good to America and to the world, which Providence had brought out in the favourable temper of our people towards religion, has been for a season eclipsed; and is even now under a cloud. But it cannot long be so. Every great evil of this kind hath a providential remedy; it carries along with it its own cure; society cannot endure it. It only remains for the sober, the enlightened, the pure, the truly zealous ministry of our different denominations, who have seen and deplored these evils, and who have felt themselves threatened to be overwhelmed by them, along with the prostration of the general interests of religion—to arise, to assert, and to wield their own appropriate influence, in united, determined, and persevering efforts to drain the land of this tide of ruin, and to bring back the religious public to their right mind.

CHAPTER VI.

The proper design and value of religious creeds in connexion with Church polity and government.

I AM aware that the apparent drift and bearing of the topic here announced may seem at the first glance to be a gratuity in this place. But I have already suggested and openly conveyed in sundry forms, incidental and direct, that the use made of the comprehensive creed, commonly called the Confession of Faith, in the practice of the highest authorities of the Presbyterian church, has been a subject of very grave difficulty in my own mind, in connexion with other developments of our religious world. It has seemed to me also, that this practice is necessarily and rapidly forcing the whole Presbyterian denomination to a crisis, which must involve the consideration and discussion of the topic I have here brought to view, in a new and interesting light. It must now unavoidably and very soon be determined by the Presbyterian church, whether assenting to a common creed and confession of faith is tantamount in its authority over the conscience to our obligations of respect for the Bible; or whether it is to be interpreted as a general expression of our belief in Christianity;—whether it is to be applied and enforced in whole and in particular—*verbatim et literatim*—by authoritative interpretation for the time being, which is of course accidental; or whether it is to be regarded as a common and declarative standard of belief, liberally interpreted, in accommodation to that invariable diversity of views, which has always characterized all religious associations, however intimate the fellowship of the individuals composing them;—whether the practical design of a mutual Confession of Faith is to unite in one society for concert of action in promoting

the cause of Christ those Christians, whose religious belief is generally of the same type, and so nearly in coincidence as to afford a pleasant and profitable exercise of Christian charity in allowing some slight diversity of speculation, rather than being the occasion of distrust and offence; or whether the principal object of a creed be to set up and authorize a perpetual inquisition over the minds of a Christian fraternity, and thus permit them the doing of little else besides. If I do not mistake in my observance of the symptoms of the time, this question is now to be tried and settled for a large portion of the religious public of the land; and for momentously important and practical purposes. I think it morally impossible, in the train of recent events, that the Christian community should not have thought much on this subject, and generally made up their minds.

Inasmuch, therefore, as my own mind has been not a little influenced by this state of things in changing my religious connexion; and inasmuch as I think it must and will be discussed in such a crisis, there may, perhaps, be some apology for my taking a part in it at the conclusion of this volume, so far as to present the substance and results of my own reasonings on the subject; nor can I see, that it is entirely alien to the general design of these pages.

The legitimate design and the exact measure of value of a mutual Confession of faith among Christians associated for the public purposes of a common Christianity, involving the question of the minuteness or generality of its specifications, is perhaps a problem yet to be solved. At the same time, that I have seen reasons for sympathizing to some extent with those who, on account of the abuses of creeds, have declared against the practice altogether, except in a simple confession on the inspired records, I have always rested in the conviction, that a common and mutual declaration of faith in that volume, under specifications sufficiently distinct and sufficient in number to comprehend and indicate the peculiar, fundamental, and leading truths of Christianity, as

necessary to the ends of Christian fellowship, may be beneficial, and is in fact practically important.

A simple profession of belief in the Bible may comprehend all that is important to and obligatory on a Christian; and it is no less true, that such a profession may be made by a man, who has not a single particle of belief in common with a Christian. It may embrace all the peculiarities of Christianity; it may embrace any given parts of them; or it may reject them all. The enlightened, sincere, humble Christian says—I believe in the Bible; and it may be, that his faith in that volume is well pleasing to God. Another Christian, less enlightened, but equally sincere and humble, says—I believe in the Bible; and his faith too may be acceptable to God. He may have some error in his belief—and what uninspired man has not? None of us can measure nicely in any balance of our own construction the degree of error which a man may hold, and yet be saved.

Two men may present themselves, both professing a belief in the Bible; but one acknowledges Jesus Christ as God, and the other denies it; or one believes in the doctrine of angels, of mind independent of matter, and of the resurrection, while the other is a sort of Sadducee, and rejects all the three; or one believes in the necessity of a spiritual renovation by Divine influence, but the other does not; and so on. Their diversity of belief, on the one side and on the other, may comprehend all the varieties that have ever been known in the history of Christianity; and yet they both profess to believe in the Bible. This diversity may go even further. A man may profess to believe in the Bible, under such mental qualifications and reservations, as to make him out a deist—an infidel. When he comes to be examined, and the true character of his faith is developed, he says, perhaps, very frankly, Oh yes, I believe in the Bible as I do in the Koran, or the sacred books of any other religion; as I do in any literary records, ancient or modern, religious or otherwise, according to their history, as asserting claims to my respect, be it more or less.

It is evident, therefore, that a simple profession of belief in the Bible is so far from determining the character and measure of a man's faith, as a Christian, that it does not even decide whether he be a Christian or an infidel; a pagan or a Mohammedan. If, therefore, men are to associate together as Christians, and for Christian purposes, they must have some other terms of agreement, than simply that they believe in the Bible. The position, therefore, that such a profession is sufficient, is a false one—false for the objects of Christian fellowship and enterprise.

It is admitted on all hands, that there are distinct peculiarities in the Christian religion; and it will also be admitted by the majority of Christians, that a profession of belief in this religion ought to be supported by a life that shall exhibit these peculiarities. "Ye are a city set on a hill; ye are the salt of the earth; ye are the light of the world; let your light so shine," &c. "Verily, verily I say unto you, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "Marvel not that I said unto you, Ye must be born again." "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own," &c. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature," &c. Some, indeed, have maintained, that the primitive sense of *conversion* implies only a coming into the Christian faith and system from Judaism, paganism, or any religious state uncongenial with Christianity. This may possibly be true, if the meaning be extended so far as to embrace a spiritual renovation of the mind and affections by the Spirit of God; but not otherwise. Such evidently was the doctrine of Christ and his apostles. The apostolic epistles evince throughout, that they maintained an inseparable connexion between the peculiarities of Christian faith and practice; and that the practice is as peculiar as the faith. They evidently attached importance to the Christian belief, as being influential over the heart, life, and manners—renovating individuals and renovating society. Christians are exhorted to "hold fast the form of sound

words ;" to " hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering ;" to " contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," &c. Departures from the faith are foretold, and the consequences, as being very disastrous. The epistles of John, who lived to a great age, and witnessed numerous apostacies of individuals, and the decline of churches, are full of admonitions on the importance of a correct faith. The most remarkable development of his patriarchal character had a uniform bearing on this practical point.

M. D'Aubigné's philosophical retrospect of the developments of Christianity under the successive periods of the Christian era, as noticed in the previous chapter, if it be admitted to be worthy of respect, shows how much importance has always been attached to doctrine—faith—which came at last to be systematized ; and for aught that can be seen, with propriety, and for public convenience and advantage. All the inspired records seem to have been contrived to assert, develope, and guard a right faith. Indeed, Christianity would obviously be defective, if it were not thoroughly furnished with the elements of doctrine concerning God, the Saviour, the design of his mission, the character and wants of man, the method devised and the agencies employed for his recovery, the future state, &c. &c.

History demonstrates, that Christians have always felt, and still feel—and the world has also been under the same impression—that the followers of Christ are to be distinguished by their faith and practice. They are a chosen and separate people ; and if separate, there must be some public, visible marks of separation. These consist primarily and formally in the right use and application of the sacramental ordinances by the proper ministerial authority. But the use of the ministry is not only to connect the church with the inspired records, as the source of its authority, but also as the fountain of religious belief. These records, since completed, are to the world simply a collection of literary compositions, satisfactorily attested as having emanated from the Divine mind. Yet, they are in truth literary records simply, in

their palpable forms, the meaning of which is to be interpreted by fair and reasonable rules of exegesis; and when rightly interpreted, they exhibit the elements of Christian faith.

Although one passage of Scripture may throw light on another, within the range of the record, yet Scripture cannot interpret itself as a whole. That is to say, a creed cannot be constructed out of its own language solely, as the medium of *conveying* its meaning. For example:—If one or more passages of Scripture be cited to explain another, and so on, till the entire record is quoted, the student has been reasoning in a circle, and finds himself in the end just where he was when he begun, and no wiser as to the meaning of the whole. He is lodged in a truism, that the Bible is the Bible. This investigation may have increased his knowledge—and his knowledge of the records examined; such must have been the result; but it will have determined no matter of faith between him and a second person, as to what the Bible declares, or reveals. The inspired record alone and nothing more, in this round, will be before the public as common property; and the question still returns—what is its meaning? Citing Scripture, therefore, to explain Scripture, cannot be a Creed, or Confession of faith. It is simply saying—We believe in the Bible.

It amounts to this:—That other forms of language must be used and applied, as a commentary, or medium of exhibiting and conveying the sense of Scripture to a community of minds. Consequently, other forms of language must be used in a creed to declare and profess a common faith, deduced from and founded on the Scriptures. This needs no further proof.

The Bible is replete with elementary principles of morals and religion, distinctly developed, yet running and melting into each other, as a beautiful and harmonious whole, or system. It is not ordinarily deemed either important or convenient for a creed, designed as a standard of Christian fellowship, and as a basis of concert in action and enterprise, to embrace every item of these principles; but only, that it should be a *summary* of doc-

trine—a comprehensive statement of the great, fundamental, and leading principles of Christianity. It is manifest, that there must be something of this kind to constitute a common ground to stand upon.

Christianity is pre-eminently a religion of sentiment—a religion begetting decided, strong, ardent feeling. And the feelings thus produced are the result of two causes in their combined and concentrated action, viz. speculative views and Divine influence—the first instrumental and the last efficient. But the last cannot or will not act but in coincidence with the light, which the first has thrown in upon the mind. The vitality and power of genuine religious sentiment depend upon correct doctrinal views, or on a correct faith. For example: On correct views of God, of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit; of man in his primitive and fallen condition; of the principle of atonement by the death of the Saviour; of the Mediatorial office; of the office of the Spirit; of the lost condition of man, as an individual, and as a race; of the advantages to be gained by the use and application of the remedy, &c. The light of the Christian scheme, as a whole, bursting in upon the mind of man—supposing that he had none of it before—would be like the day that follows night. And it amounts to the same thing in the end, whether it comes at once, or whether it comes by degrees. It makes a new world—a new creation; or rather opens on the mind the universe as it is, in connexion with its Supreme Head. Where all was darkness, all becomes light. It produces an entire new state of feeling, as compared with the necessary doom of man independent of such a system of redeeming agencies.

But these impressions, these sentiments, these feelings, as being ardent and powerful, are awakened by the peculiarities of Christianity—by what it exhibits of God in relation to man in the scheme of redemption. Observe what a transformation of character it produced in the Apostles, in the first Christians; and what of the same thing it has done from that age to this, and is still doing. What motives must they be, that have produced such results! And all this has depended and always

depends upon the views brought before the mind; which become incorporated with the affections; and which are habitually cherished. There may be a nominal Christianity, which has no such power; but its essence always produces the same effect. Christianity may be and has been adulterated; and hence the importance, the necessity of keeping up its vitality by a conventional "form of sound words;" that is, by a suitable creed, imbodying the vital principles—the all-powerful elements of this religion. I know not, but the time may come when creeds may be dispensed with; but in the present state of the human mind and of society it seems impossible.

If, then, it may be considered as settled, that it is more convenient, if not necessary, for Christians to be associated under such an instrument, three or four important questions arise. First, how comprehensive shall it be? Next, shall it be simply declarative, or also demonstrative and expository? Thirdly, shall it be catholic, or sectarian? And lastly, ought slight deviations to be regarded as worthy of disciplinary notice?

First, how comprehensive shall it be? I presume not to assume the office of advice and control, but merely use the privilege of declaring individual and private opinion. I think, then, that a creed, or confession of faith, (I use these terms as convertible, and in the broadest sense), to be adopted by the Church of Christ, ought to be sufficiently particular to bring out distinctly all the essentials of Christianity, and sufficiently comprehensive to be used and appreciated by all classes. If it be not so constructed as to meet the first of these requisites, the grand design fails to be accomplished, viz. a mutual declaration, not only of our faith in the Bible as the word of God, but of those distinctive peculiarities and essential doctrines, which we are agreed the Bible teaches. A confession of faith on the Bible should not only determine, that those who adopt it are Christians in their belief, in distinction from a confession on the same records, which any philosopher or literary man might make, whether he be a Christian or not; but it should also determine, on all essential points, our views of the

character and attributes of God; of the character, work, and offices of Christ; of the Holy Spirit; of the character and wants of man in relation to God and the Christian scheme; of what man was before the fall, of what he is since, and of the change required in him as a preparation for holy and useful living on earth, and for happiness in heaven; of the future states of reward and punishment; and of sundry other doctrines prominently revealed in Scripture, and practically important. It should be distinctly declarative of all the positive institutions that are peculiar to Christianity, such as the consecration of a seventh part of time to religious and holy purposes; the Christian ministry and its appropriate offices; the sacraments; private, family, and public worship; private and public reading, teaching, and studying of the Scriptures; matrimony and its laws; family and civil commonwealths, with the peculiar rights and powers of each, &c. The moral, perpetual, and universal obligations of the Decalogue, in all its parts and bearings, should have a distinct recognition; as well also the obligation of all parts of holy Scripture, strictly and purely moral, and of universal application. The two great and comprehensive laws of Christ, on love to God and love to man, should be made prominent.

It may easily be seen, that the Church of Christ, as an organized society, bound together in covenant with God and with each other for private and public good, for the maintenance and propagation of Christian principles, and for the grand enterprise intrusted to her of subjugating the world to Jesus Christ, of "teaching all nations, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," would be defective without some public and distinct recognitions, as particular and comprehensive as these. These fundamental and grand principles should be set forth, as "line upon line, and precept upon precept." They should be a part of common and universal education, public and private. Else, from the known depravity of man, the church would decline, and Christianity become a nullity, as to its hal-

lowing and efficacious influences in renovating human character and human society.

Secondly, ought a creed, or confession of faith, to be simply declarative, or should it go into proof and exposition? It will be apparent, that for the most common and popular uses of a creed, it cannot conveniently go far beyond the province of declaration. The proof and exposition more properly belong to the offices of public and private instruction. Indeed, a creed, strictly and properly, is nothing more than a declaration, or profession, involving an appeal for proof and explanation to the record, on which it is founded. It may be proper and expedient for the church in her supervisory offices to construct, authorize, and publish such manuals of proof and exposition to accompany creeds, as may be needful to guide, assist, and perfect her members and the public generally in the study and knowledge of the Scriptures. But these can hardly be regarded as properly component parts of a creed, or confession of faith.

Thirdly, should a creed be catholic, or sectarian? Of course, I use these words, catholic and sectarian, in the most catholic and enlarged sense, unless in application to the latter such a pretension should seem to be a contradiction in terms. There is something so narrow, so contracted, and so obnoxious to *catholic* feeling in the term *sectarian*, that one can hardly conceive of its having a very *liberal* signification. Both the word and its suggestions, it must be confessed, are alike unwholesome. And if I and my readers are agreed in this, we shall also agree, without the trouble of argument, that a creed ought not to be sectarian. It is the most unsuitable, most unbecoming place for the introduction of such a leaven, that can be imagined. It is the pest of individuals, the pest of society, and the very poison of a creed. Nothing can be more offensive anywhere; in a public and common declaration of faith in God's word, it is loathsome—it is a profanation of the most sacred things—a prostitution of that which is holy, and which ought to be kept holy, to the unhallowed ends of unhallowed ambition, or of some morbid and extravagant sentiment.

Let every Christian sect enjoy their own sectarian peculiarities; it is their right so long as it suits them. Let them be incorporated and stand out in their chosen manuals; to this there can be no objection. But for the honour of religion and the edification of the church, let them not appear in so holy and sacred a composition, as a solemn public confession of faith, declarative of the great and catholic principles of Christianity, ought to be. The form and terms of a common creed, as seems to me, ought to be as pure from such an ingredient, as the terms and form of a common and public prayer. It should be properly a devotional composition, calculated, whenever read or heard to assist devotion—to abstract the mind entirely from the regions and atmosphere of controversy, and to bring it in immediate contact with those fundamental and prominent truths of revelation, which are so obvious, as to commend themselves to every mind, that is openly and honestly disposed to receive and cherish what God has spoken.

Lastly, ought slight deviations from assent to each and every several item of a creed, that has numerous and minute ramifications, to be regarded as worthy of disciplinary notice? This is a very important and practical question—a question which, perhaps, has made more disturbance in the Christian world than any other—a question, which has armed the papal inquisition with terrific powers—and which in all ages and countries disposes a like disposition to tyrannize over the church of God. It is a practice on the affirmative of this question, which has to a great extent brought creeds into disrepute—into absolute contempt. It is mistaking the legitimate design of a creed, and perverting it to the purposes of unholy ambition.

I will not say, that there is no measure of deviation from a conventional and prescribed form of Christian doctrine, that should be visited with the admonitions and corrective efforts of disciplinary authority; but the lessons of past, and I may add, of present experience, ought to advise those, who are set to guard "the form of sound words" in the church of Christ, that deviation may be

suspected where there is none; that the degree may be aggravated by a misunderstanding; that it is often innonocent when it is supposed to be injurious, or venial when it is pronounced to be criminal; and that in all cases of slight deviation, it is more easily corrected by kindness, by forbearance, and by gentleness, than by inquisitorial severity. Doubtless, it is expedient, and more favourable to harmony of purpose, and efficiency of combined enterprise, that a comfortable uniformity in the recognition and acceptance of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity should characterize those, who are associated under the same Christian denomination. But the theory is entirely false, that there can be no Christian fellowship, no harmony of general design, no concert of action, no union in the grand enterprise of converting sinners and evangelizing the world, without an exact uniformity of speculation and belief in regard to the minor details and more unimportant specifications of a common creed. So far is this from being true, that something like the very opposite can be demonstrated in every Christian's personal experience, and by bright and most cheering constellations of facts and events, which at this moment lie thickly clustering and splendidly effulgent on the map of the religious world.

With those who approve of these institutions, and take an interest in them—which generally characterizes the American community—I might allude to the experiments and proofs of the age in which we live, as developed in the Bible, Tract, Sunday School, Temperance, and various other societies, religious and humane, on the public platforms of which Christians of all creeds and of all sects have met together, shaken hands, reciprocated the kindest and holiest charities, prayed together, pledged union, been happy, and, as they have confessed, more happy than ever before, by the discovery, in the experience of actual contact, that it is the cardinal principles of Christianity, and not the minor details of sectarian creeds, which constitute the ground of Christian fellowship—which bind men to each other and to God. I have no concern but that this appeal, and to other facts of

the same class, will be perfectly convincing—that it will be overwhelming against the opposite theory ; because I have the heart, the affections, the charities of every Christian on my side. What Christian in encountering—as who has not encountered—a Christian of another sect, differing very widely as was supposed—the very name of which, perhaps, from the prejudices of education, had been unpleasant—but meeting together providentially, both parties courteous to each other in their manners, speaking kindly on topics where they differed, reciprocating affection on those in which they agreed, sympathizing on the grand principles of a common religion, uniting perhaps in the worship of a common Father through a common Mediator and Redeemer—what Christian, I ask, in such an interview and by such intercourse, has not felt the kindlings of a fraternal and holy affection, and at last found out, that he did not love such a brother, or confide in him the less, because they differed ; but that he actually loved him the more on that very account, found more pleasure in his society, and was more happy, because he had providentially discovered, that his previous impressions were wrong and unnecessary ; and that it is the image of Christ, beaming out from the mind, in the action of the affections, that constitutes the element of Christian union, and not any particular shapes and modes of speculative opinion ?—We have here laid open before us a principle, which has numberless bearings, and which is always the same in all relations and conditions. Christians, on becoming acquainted and in the exercise of charity, where kindness of manners is properly exemplified, actually love one another more under different, than under the same shades of opinion. The philosophy of this I have nothing to do with ; it is the fact which I wish to develope.

It is, however, doubtless an elementary principle of Christian affection—the same in God and the same in man—the same in Him who came down from heaven, in love for those who differed from him, to reconcile them by kindness, and to enjoy their gratitude and confidence ; the same, when he bears with their imperfections and

errors, after they have been united to him ; and the same in every Christian's heart towards a brother, whom he finds worthy of his respect and esteem, under all other diversities of character and opinion. The wider the difference, the greater the Saviour's love when he came to help us—to save us. And although the two cases are not in every feature exactly alike; yet for aught I can see, the principle is the same:—Christians who hope to meet at last in heaven, in the exercise of charity do not love each other the less, but rather more, because of some accidental and unavoidable differences of opinion here. God has ordained, that they shall have their happiness in the exercise of such charity ; it is so ; they find it so.

It is, therefore, throughout and radically a false position—entirely false—that a nice and exact agreement in the minuter specifications of a religious creed, is essential to Christian fellowship, union, and enterprise. So far from it, these very differences, if charitably tolerated, may and will be the means of purer and more ardent affection, of higher degrees of fellowship, and are calculated to unite Christians by stronger ties, to render more holy and more intense their laudable emulations, as well as to give greater efficiency to combined enterprises. If they are agreed in recognising the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, it is enough for these purposes ; I had almost said—I am indeed strongly inclined to the opinion, in the present imperfect state of knowledge, of society, and of human nature—that it is even better to differ more or less on minor and more unessential points, if it can be done charitably ; because these differences, leading to kind discussion, are calculated to elicit and ultimately to establish the system of universal truth. "In necessariis, unitas ; in non necessariis, libertas ; in omnibus, charitas." In things necessary, unity ; in things unnecessary, liberty ; in all things, charity. Such is the spirit, and such, I will dare say, is the design of Christianity. Alas! that it has been so badly exemplified!

The only possible apology, therefore, for an exact and rigid enforcement of the minute and more unessential

points of a religious creed, fails—and fails utterly. It is not necessary to Christian fellowship ; it is not necessary to union ; it is not necessary to combined enterprise ; it is not necessary for any conceivable object, that is important, even if it could be shown to be desirable ; but it is unfriendly, pernicious, disastrous, in all its influences and bearings.

It may indeed be questioned, whether it is within the limits of the proper design of a church polity and government to make even very considerable deviations from the commonly acknowledged creed the subject of disciplinary visitation ; and for the grand and practical reason, that the argument from history is at best very slender, that orthodoxy when possessed is ever maintained, or when lost is ever recovered, by such a course. Nay, I am inclined to the opinion, that the argument from this source falls into the opposite scale. What has the church of Rome ever gained by the Inquisition, or by any other modes of enforcing the acceptance and currency of her orthodoxy ? What have any of the Reformed churches ever gained by the application of force, or any methods of discipline, direct or indirect, for the cause of their orthodoxy ? Did the church of Geneva do any good by it ? Or the church of Scotland ? Has the church of England ever been benefited by enforcing discipline on the non-conformists and Puritans ? Say, that the grounds of controversy, in this case, were for the most part political ; yet it was a principle, or principles contended for, as being of Divine authority. What was gained in the early history of New-England by enforcing orthodoxy ? and what is now likely to be gained in the Presbyterian church ? These certainly are very grave questions—questions which come to us trumpet tongued with the admonitions of history. It is a simple matter of fact, that every church under heaven, that has persevered in the enforcement of its orthodoxy, whatever it might be, has succeeded in—what ? In enforcing schism.

What, then, shall we do ? Submit to the invasions and encroachments of error, till truth be eradicated from the church, and banished the world ? This question

seems at first sight to present a painful dilemma. But still the lessons of history are not to be despised. And further: God and his truth and his Spirit are worthy of respect. We may be assured, that God will not suffer truth to perish from the earth; and if violence has ever and uniformly failed to maintain and promote it, the authorities of the church should pause before they resort to it, even though it were not objectionable in itself.

But is not a resort to this source, for the pretended purpose of preventing evil, while sufficient power is left, a criminal distrust of Providence? Of course, this power could not be used without being possessed; and the possession of it proves, that the major part of influence in such an exigency is in favour of the orthodoxy contended for. The only question, then, in such a case, is—what is the best mode of applying that influence? Shall it be the argument of truth, depending on God? Or the argument of force, depending on man? This is the naked and simple question; and if there be no advice in history, and none in the nature of the case, why, then, the authorities of the church are at liberty, as we will suppose, to make an experiment. But the experiment is before us a thousand times told, and a thousand times at the end of that; and I hardly need say, that it has left in its train little but sadness and gloom. Let the history of the Inquisition—let the fires of Smithfield and Oxford—and other like exhibitions, not confined to papal atrocities—not confined to European territories—tell the story.

As an example of the redeeming influence, present and prospective, of a remnant of fidelity in one of the most prominent branches of Protestant Christianity, we have before us at this moment the instructive spectacle of the church of England. Allowing the worst of her case as a church and state institution; that her clergy are for the most part the creatures of political men, feeling little or no concern for the maintenance of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and whose lives correspond with the influences which have installed them in their places; yet is it felt, admitted, and believed, by the best and

most conscientious men—and my own opinion accords entirely with this judgment—that that church, under all these disadvantages, is fast reviving, returning to the orthodoxy of her creed, and recovering the primitive vitality of Christianity. The fidelity of her clergy is increasing both in respect to their number and influence every year. It is felt and believed—and I believe it—no well-informed Christian in England doubts—that she is destined by Providence to be thoroughly reformed and purified; that she is even now rapidly advancing in this career.

Suppose, that a zeal for reform in doctrine should at this moment take possession of the authorities of that church—and certainly they have need enough of it; suppose, that her numerous clergy and communicants should be brought to the bar of their received and acknowledged creed, and tried by it; how many of them would be acquitted? How many of them would be convicted of the various degrees of error from the purest orthodoxy down to infidelity in its worst forms? All these errors and all these corruptions are not only there, but they abound—abound in the ranks of the clergy and church dignitaries, and through all the grades of her communicants, from the highest officers of state and from the nobility down to the meanest subjects of the empire. If a thorough discipline should be set up and carried into that church, making the orthodoxy of her creed the standard of trial, it would rend it in ten thousand fragments, leaving scarce a wreck behind. Of such a result, on such a contingency, there could not be a single doubt. Which course, therefore, would wisdom, and prudence, and conscience prescribe—to permit that church to go on in her career of reformation, maintaining her integrity, under the moral certainty, that she will by-and-by recover all that is desirable, and be prepared, in the majesty of her strength, combined with the purity of her orthodoxy, to renovate that kingdom, and to throw out her influence for the renovation of the world; or to blight at once by a single blow every hope of such a result, by enforcing discipline on her present actual defections?

And if a mere remnant of fidelity can accomplish such a work, without the power of discipline, and against such a fearful odds of corruption—what could not the moral power of the Presbyterian church of the United States accomplish on the same principle, when her clergy and her communicants are so pure, that none can impeach the fidelity of their conscience, or the general orthodoxy of their views? Will that church dare, in present circumstances, and against all the admonitory lessons of history, so to distrust Providence, as to seize the sword of discipline for deviations from her creed so slight, as to divide the whole church nearly in equal parts on the question, whether it be in fact a deviation, or a different mode of interpretation; whether the subject in controversy be a question of philosophy or of fact?

Take the Protestant Episcopal church of the United States. It is commonly supposed, that there is no inconsiderable diversity of opinion in her own communion, both among the clergy and laity, as to her distinctive peculiarities, and also in regard to many items of faith common to themselves and other denominations. How far this suposition is well founded, I do not feel qualified to say. I neither affirm, nor deny. Be there more or less of truth in it, a reference to that church in this view is pertinent to my present purpose; and I think it will be acknowledged as strikingly illustrative of the subject in discussion. But notwithstanding this diversity of opinion, affirmed to be great, we hear of no controversy there—none among her bishops, none among her clergy, none among her communicants; and it may be presumed there is none of any consequence. Indeed, I am satisfactorily certified, that the Episcopal church is almost perfectly harmonious, and increasingly so.

That the Episcopal church is fast rising in the improved character, purity, and efficiency of her ministry, and in the same points of character among the laity, I believe is universally felt and admitted; and rising perhaps, faster than any other church. And it is supposed and believed to an equal extent, that in no Christian denomination of the country is there so great a diversity

of opinion about doctrines, church polity, &c. But we hear of no discipline on account of this diversity. The probability is, that discipline on these accounts would rend and break up the church. In the face of this diversity they are contented with the adoption and use of the Liturgy, which speaks the same language in the hands of every member, before every congregation, and in the mouth of every clergyman throughout the land. No clergyman disturbs the peace of his congregation because he imagines, or even knows, that some of his parishioners hold opinions different from his own. No bishop arraigns his clergy for diversity of opinion, although they are perfectly open and unreserved in declaring their opinions, even in the face of the diocesan. I have heard it, and been as much surprised as I was delighted at the freedom allowed, and at the perfect good nature and kindness with which such differences are discussed —the bishop himself assuming no more the airs of authority, than if he had none. The bishops also are harmonious among themselves, perfectly so; harmonious in feeling, and unanimous in their economical measures; although it is undoubtedly equally true, that their speculations about doctrine, and their theories relating to church polity and government, are characterized by important shades of difference. I am well certified, that it is getting to be more and more a recognised and practical principle in the Episcopal church, to urge nothing in dioceses or General Convention, which cannot be carried with a tolerable degree of unanimity.

Here, then, is another spectacle of a church rising and improving, maintaining universal harmony of feeling, and concert of action, at the same time that there is in fact a great, and in some instances a wide diversity of opinion on many points of doctrine and practice—a diversity which, if made a subject of disciplinary notice, would be sufficient to destroy the church. Is not this a lesson? Is it not instructive? Does it not prove, that an exact agreement, even in the main points of a common creed—and I may add, in some of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity—is not essential to harmony of feeling, to

Christian fellowship, to general union, to concert of action, to edification, and to efficiency of combined enterprise?

There is no church in the world, that has in fact so great a diversity of opinion in her own bosom, as the Church of England, and not a little of downright infidelity. And yet no one can reasonably doubt, that if she shall continue to let discipline for opinion alone, and if her pious and faithful clergy shall bend all their efforts at a general reformation in heart and life, with dependance on God and the power of his truth—and if the number of faithful clergy shall continue to increase, as they have done—that most important branch of Protestantism will ere long be redeemed from her past and present disadvantages, and recover the primitive vitality of Christianity, so as to have it pervading and animating her whole communion. Nor is it less certain, that by attempting discipline for opinion, she would for ever blight all these prospects.

Let it not be supposed, that in acceding to the opinion, that it would be inexpedient to introduce direct and punitive discipline to eradicate and expel corrupt opinions from the English church, in its present peculiar circumstances, I adopt or advocate the principle, that the supervisory authorities of the church have no responsibility in maintaining its purity from such corruptions; or that as a Christian pastor, I should not think it my duty to have regard to this object; or that in any other relation of supervision, which might in any supposable case belong to me, I could deem myself excused from such a care. Purity of doctrine and purity of morals, in the Christian church, are in all cases the prime and high obligation of the ministerial office to maintain by all proper and legitimate means, and in the use of the best discretion. The question here at issue is simply, What treatment is due to a given case, and what in all probability would be best for the interests of religion in such a case? If an adversary should meet me, and deny the right of discretion, I should at once demur to his averment, and between me and him that would be the

end. The proverb, that circumstances alter cases, might be applied here in all good conscience before God; and in no case of the kind could an enlightened conscience disregard circumstances.

Were there no other examples in the world but these two, viz. the Church of England and the Episcopal Church of the United States, showing the comparative advantages of allowing a wide scope and great diversity to speculative religious opinions, yet are these on so large a scale and so important, as to be worthy of great respect and great influence for practical purposes. They are eminent, they are commanding, and they are also positive. Were it convenient, I have no doubt, that others of the same class might be adduced. But these are quite sufficient, if we set over against them all the unhappy results, which lie scattered along the history of the church in all ages, as occasioned by authoritative attempts to enforce uniformity of religious thinking. Never—never has this been attempted without disaster; certainly, I think, never for good. When will Christians—when will the church be wise on this subject? When will they learn to trust in God, in the simple energy of his truth, accompanied by the power of his Spirit?

It remains yet to be seen, how much responsibility lies at the door of the church for multiplying schisms by attempting to enforce opinion. The human mind will never submit to it; it cannot; God never intended it should; it is not desirable. Were man doomed to such a fate, he would be shut out from the pale of a moral universe, and fail to answer the design of his existence. He would no longer respect himself, nor be respected; he would become the resigned, the doomed victim of necessity.

If I may presume to say it, the Christian world wants more philosophy—philosophy of mind and philosophy of observation. It has been cantingly said—We have too much philosophy—that it is philosophy which has done religion so much injury. This is a mistake. We want the philosophy of common sense—inductive—founded upon facts—growing out of observation. So

long as religion is propounded as a mystery—a thing not to be understood—not to be philosophized upon—so long it will be at war with common sense; and so long, it may be expected, that attempts will be made to enforce its dogmas without allowing the privilege of thinking. In all ages the enforcement of religious dogmas has gone hand in hand with a consciousness, and often with a confession of not being able to explain them. A thing that can be explained need not be enforced; there is no motive for it. But the dogmas of the Koran must be enforced; so also must the superstitious dogmas of papal Rome; and so is it sometimes imprudently attempted in certain sections of the Reformed Church. Some things have got into creeds, which are not quite plain, and which cannot easily be made so; and the way to make them go down is to say and insist—you shall believe them, whether you can or not. And the greater the consciousness of a want of reason in them, the greater the fierceness to impose and enforce them. If they could be defended by clear and reasonable interpretations of the Bible, this anxiety would be wanting. A consciousness of strength on that ground would rest upon it solely. Ordinarily, the fierceness of religious controversy and the zeal and determination to impose religious dogmas may be measured very exactly by a consciousness of weakness in argument. In such cases religion mounts up from the heart to the head, and instead of being a religion of the heart and conscience, it becomes a religion of the head and *will*—that unconquerable will, which nothing but the power of God can subdue—that will, whose first triumph is the subjugation of the mind of which it is a part; and which then sets out on the fierce crusade of making victims of all unbelievers that may come in its way.

When I suggest, that the claim to impose religious mysteries is not to be respected, I would not be understood as denying, that there are Bible truths, which cannot be comprehended. Doubtless there are many. So are there incomprehensible facts everywhere in the world of nature. We are surrounded by them. Nevertheless we admit them. Reason teaches us to receive and make

the best of them we can. But they are not mysteries in the sense in which I use the term. I mean by mystery a proposition, or dogma, which is at war with settled and known principles and with common sense—which is never the case with truths of revelation, however incomprehensible they may be.

Nor in advocating the use of philosophy in religion do I mean anything more, than being guided by induction—by a consideration of facts—and by the use and application of theories founded on facts. Anything that can be proved from the Bible I receive as a fact, or truth, or principle, &c., according to the category, to which it belongs. In a consideration of the philosophy of mind, relating to our subject, I hold for example, what all experience proves, that it is unphilosophical to attempt to enforce opinion; and that the authorities of the church ought to have learned this long ago. Any attempt of this kind shows a censurable neglect of philosophic observation. They should have learned also, that if any who have gone before us have ever been so unphilosophical, as to imagine, that the proper design of a creed is to make all, who agree to come under it, think exactly alike, they adopted an impracticable theory—a theory, which was never yet sustained by the actual state of any two minds. They should have learned, moreover, that Christians can love one another, can have fellowship, can unite, can act together, can do anything that Christ requires of them, even though they entertain diversity of religious opinions; and that the way to make them hate, bite, and devour each other, is to imbue them with the notion, that the first duty of Christians is to bring about a universal harmony of opinion, and to engage in the task with unflinching determination by a direct and positive, and if needs be, compulsory effort. They should have learned, that the only proper and legitimate design of a creed is, that it should be a comprehensive, declarative, suggestive, and devotional manual —not binding on the conscience, as the Bible is—but a help to keep alive in the public mind a knowledge of the Bible, especially of its elementary and practical truths;

and that discipline for not understanding, or not acknowledging the whole of a creed, or for entertaining diversity of opinion respecting some of its declarations or suggestions, is as preposterous as to discipline a man for a physical impossibility; because, it is no more than charitable to admit, what is a simple matter of fact, that knowledge of the Bible, as of anything else, is acquired by degrees; that different members of the community are found in all its stages; and that it is a physical impossibility for all of them to see exactly alike.

I have intimated, that the responsibility of schisms in the church of Christ rests more than what is commonly imagined on the vice of attempting to enforce a perfect uniformity of religious belief. Indeed, it seems to me that history will demonstrate, that it rests almost entirely here. And moreover, it has filled the Christian world with uncharitableness; for nothing produces this effect so certainly and so sadly, as to be driven off from a religious connexion by such a cause. It has made our land literally to swarm with religious sects. No part of Christendom has been so prolific in this product, as our country. It might almost be said to be our religious staple. This land of freedom has in this particular proved most intolerant; and intolerance has multiplied schisms like the locusts of Egypt. It will be a curious item in the philosophy of history, and not a little creditable to him, who shall, at some future time, clearly develope the successive modifications and operations of this moral cause, which has been so active and powerful in the progress of our community. Just at this moment, another grand explosion seems ready to burst upon us, and the Presbyterian church of the United States is in all probability to be rent in twain, if not broken into several fragments, by this same cause.

I am aware it will be said, and no doubt honestly felt by those who advocate the rigid enforcement of creeds, that all this is because we have been too lax—because we did not begin soon enough. We have suffered the enemy to come in and take possession of our citadel, and now we must expel him by force. All this loose-

ness of doctrine, and all these extravagances and irregularities are owing to our neglect of discipline.

It is not easy to convince those who see with such eyes, that this statement does not develope the connexion of cause and effect—that the consequence deplored has a very different relation. If I have not already suggested, in a former part of this volume, the real causes of these misfortunes, there is hardly space left for me to traverse that field again; nor am I in the mood for it. In one word I may say—that to my mind the causes seem these three: First, the great religious susceptibility of our community, which under proper cultivation and guidance would be a most interesting and hopeful feature; next, an element, which has ever been found among us, tending to sudden irruptions of undisciplined and wild enthusiasm; and last, the unhappiness and inadequacy of ecclesiastical organizations. I must be excused for suggesting the last, as it is a conviction as honest as either of the others. I do not insist, that any should concur with me, to whom it is not agreeable. I find in these causes and others akin to them, enough to afford a complete development of our religious history in these particulars, without resorting to the neglect of enforcing religious creeds.

It is a singular fact, that these two extremes, viz. a boast of religious freedom and a persevering effort to strangle it, should have characterized the religious history of this country. Is it indeed true, that they, whose fathers once suffered for want of religious freedom, should make the attempt to guard the right with such muniments, and defend it with such determination, as to become in turn the oppressors? Is it indeed true, that the power of creeds, in asserting what has been forbidden, has itself become the forbidder and constrainer, and with the presumptuous hand of an Uzzah, taken rash hold of that sacred deposit, which God claims to have in his own keeping? That great Protestant principle—the Bible, and nothing but the Bible—seems not yet to have been well understood by all Protestants; but the anxiety of every sectarian to defend and enforce his own inter-

pretations of the sacred volume inclines him to trample this principle under foot. He does not believe in God, in the Bible, in Christianity and its appropriate agencies, who betrays an anxiety so excessive for the acceptance and sway of the inspired volume, according to his own constructions, as to insist on being the sole interpreter. In such instances, the vitality of Christianity is abandoned, for the sake of keeping in order its vestments; the germ is stifled by putting iron bands on the shell; the will is gratified at the expense of the affections; and the fabric is threatened with demolition by a strife as to who shall be its keepers. Man assumes to stand in the place of God.

It is most important to be observed, that the grand historical developments of the human mind are always in mass, whether the subject be religion, politics, or whatever; and that in the treatment of it, this high and commanding consideration ought not to be overlooked. Narrow and contracted views, and plans of operations based upon them, will necessarily prove unfortunate. If, for example, there appears at one time a manifest development of the general mind in a strong tendency towards any one capital religious error, with a corresponding train of minor errors, the treatment which we should prudently adopt towards an individual mind so inclined in humouring, guiding, and controlling it, till we might see it again established on safe ground, instead of treating it rashly and rudely, and driving it farther into error than it was itself disposed, and perhaps confirming it there for ever—is the very kind of treatment which should be adopted towards the general mind in such a predicament. It should not be assumed at once, that orthodoxy and the world are all going to ruin, and a cry of alarm raised, that shall frighten or tempt the public into the very position feared; or remedies so severe applied, as to drive them into it. There are large portions of the mind of this country firmly and permanently lodged in error by this very means, from which they might have been rescued, if they had been treated more

prudently and tenderly. God has adapted mind and truth to each other in favourable circumstances, when the mind is exempt from passion, and addressed by proper means; and there is no fear of the final result, unless the mind is in some way abused.

There is empiricism in morals and religion, as well as in medicine and politics; and one of the greatest evils of our country is false alarm, and the manufacture and recommendation of nostrums to meet the exigences. This has lately been a grand development of the public mind—a taste for entertaining alarm, which begets a corresponding multiplication of agencies to meet the demand. The consequence has been, that the mind of the country has been ridden by so many hobbies of reformation, that it has become completely jaded—worried out; and the next development about to come, will be a demand for a breathing time. Extremes lead to extremes. If the public mind is seen running furiously one way, the spectator has only to stand still, and he will soon see it chasing back, somewhat tired, it may be, but with a strong tendency to go too far the other way. God forbid, that we should make sport with human nature, ourselves being a part of it; but I confess I can hardly repress the smile of incredulity while I am drawing a picture which everybody will recognise. Verily, we want more philosophers—Christian, conscientious philosophers, of cool, temperate, discerning minds, with sufficient decision of character and energy of purpose to keep things steady.

It is now more than twenty years since I have been accustomed to hear with no little respect, till at last it has become a stale, worn out cant: *We are all going to ruin!* For my part, I don't believe it. And if it were indeed so, I would rather run at last, like the frightened partridge, put my head under a leaf, and die at a single blow from an invisible hand, than be in a perpetual state of alarm. What can be more ridiculous? Was ever a people more prosperous—and, being these morbid excitements, more happy? Did ever a people have more of temporal or of eternal good within their reach? And yet

must we be doomed to encounter everywhere troops of reforming and itinerating empirics, who compel us to hear them say—If you don't do this, or that; if you don't join this society, or the other, we shall all go to ruin! The alternative of every one's nostrum is—ruin! He brings in his own made-up statistics, reports, and certificates, and proves it. Alarm has become a trade in the community, and the love of excitement the appetite that supports it. The Romans have come in to possess the land! To your posts and watch towers, O Israel!

THE END.

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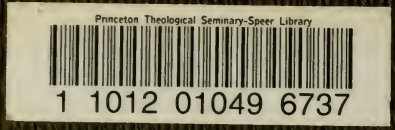
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